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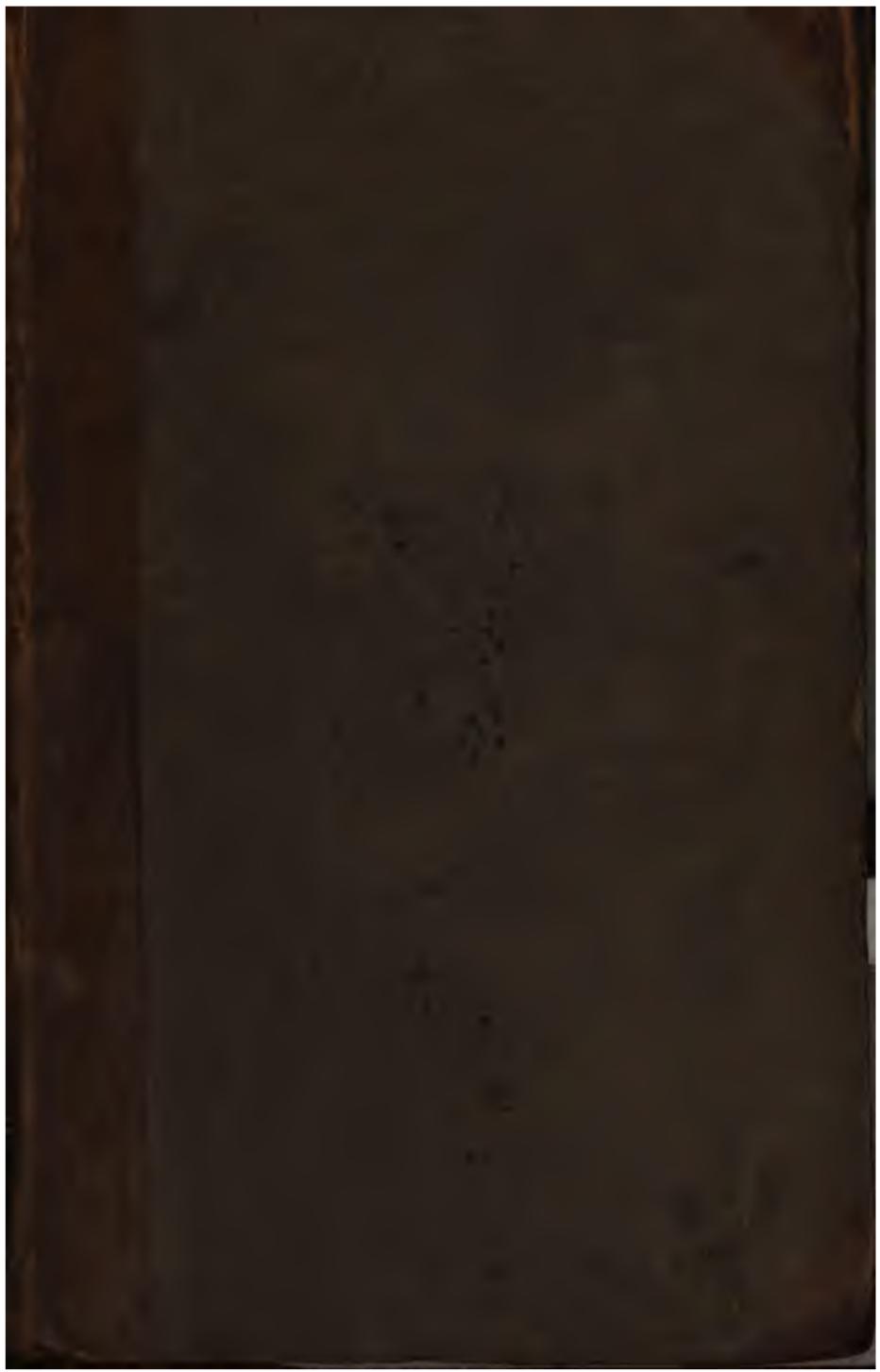
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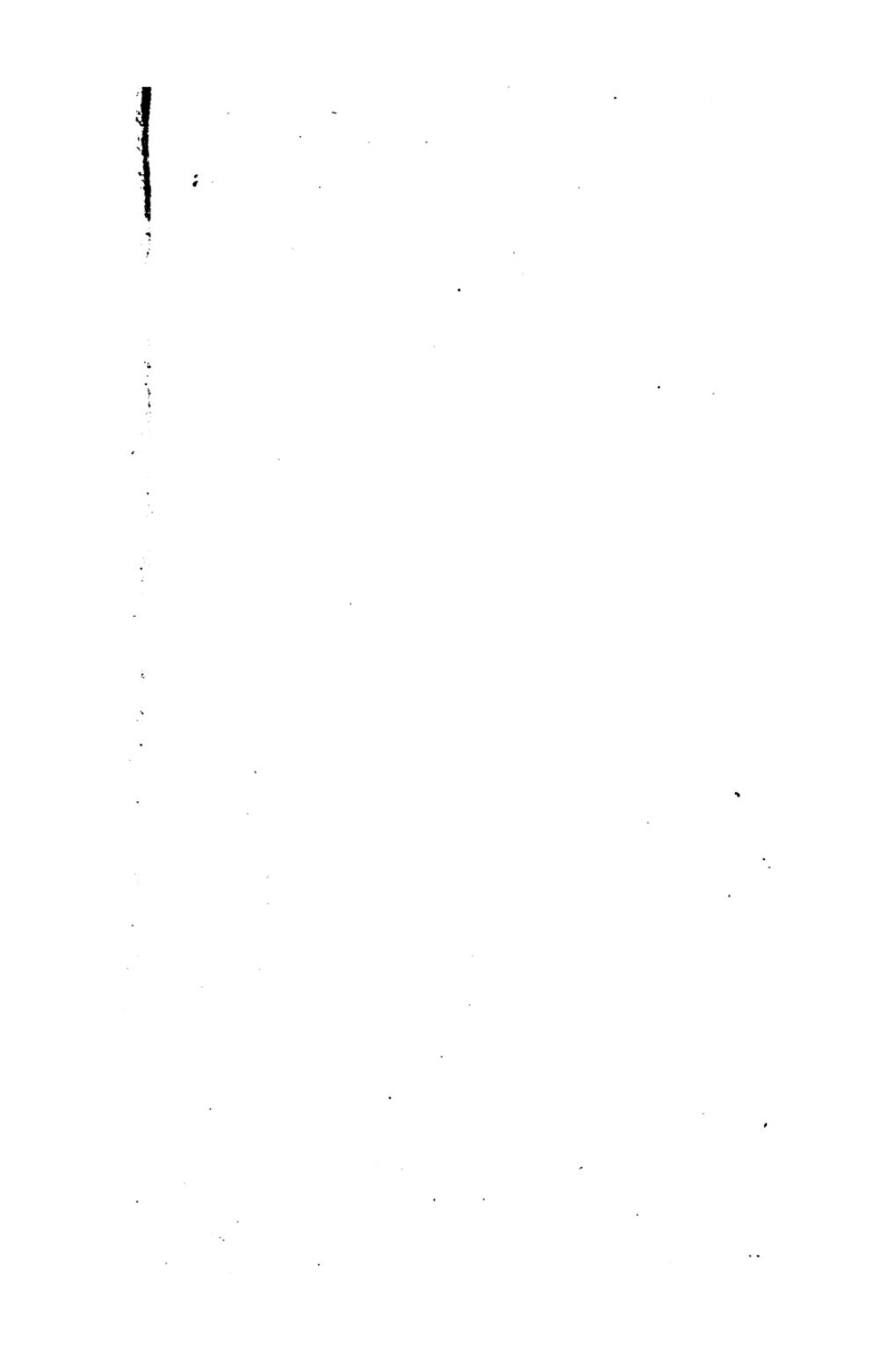
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THE
BRAVO OF BOHEMIA;
OR,
THE BLACK FOREST.
A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

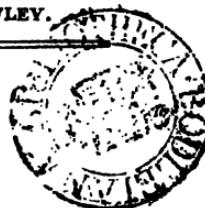
BY THE AUTHOR OF
**JESSY, OR THE ROSE OF DONALD'S COTTAGE; YAMBOO, OR
THE NORTH AMERICAN SLAVE, &c. &c.**

For only such a wretch can wander here,
Who e'en the winds and show'rs of rain defies—
Out-daring all the anger of the skies.
Observe his face; see, his disorder'd hair
Is ruffled by the tempest-beaten air;
Yet look what tracks of grief have ag'd his face,
Where hardly twenty years have run their race.

COWLEY.

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THE

BRAVO OF BOHEMIA.

CHAPTER I.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fatigue of body and mind the count had encountered through such a day, his friends had no sooner left him to seek the repose they saw he so much needed, than, regardless of every entreaty from Oswald that he would defer any further conversation with the man till the following day, he gave orders for his immediate attendance, and again demanded a repetition of the detail he had before given him, with every particular he might have omitted, while

himself sat in silent anguish to hear the recital.

Strengthened by the refreshment given him at the castle, and encouraged by the count's forbearance, from whom he expected severity that would extend no mercy, he began, and related, as he had already done, every event till the period fixed on for the removal of the young count.

"But we had yet," he added, "to determine in what manner this should be effected; and, after rejecting many, at last fixed on one I proposed, though it was not altogether what Franciseo liked; but we had no choice, as no other seemed so likely to promise success."

"There was in the neighbourhood a young woman, of whom I was very fond; but, as I had not sufficient to support a wife, we were obliged to wait, in expectation of better times; and when I went to live with Francisco, I was too much engrossed by the prospect of getting wealth, to remember the promise I had made of letting her know when I was provided for.

I now recollect she might be of great service; and, as I really loved her, had no objection to making her the companion of my journey into Switzerland.

" She was intimately acquainted with the nurse who attended the young count, and came from the same town where a daughter of this woman's still resided, as also the parents of the girl I wished to make my wife; and it was in her frequent visits to the nurse I first became acquainted with her. It was necessary to bring her to our purpose by my promise of instantly marrying her, and revealing the money I did and should possess, for Francisco had already given me more than I had ever raised by industry. I had then to inform her of the part she must take, to secure even a greater sum; and, by describing how happy it would make us together in any part of the world we wished to seek, I easily prevailed on her to enter into the scheme.

" There was no difficulty in getting her

into the castle, as she was well acquainted with the stairs leading to the nursery, where she often went; and all depended on her finding the nurse alone. It was therefore settled she should go, towards the close of one evening, and, as an excuse for calling so late, say that she was going home for a few days, if she had any message to send her daughter, and would see her again on the following night, to take charge of it: this was added to give her an excuse for doing so, if no opportunity offered on the first night to complete their work.

"Franciseo had provided her with a small powder, that, if possible, she was to give her in some beverage; and it would instantly take effect, by rendering her unfit to give any account of what passed till we should be far on our journey; but that she was to leave her before her senses were quite gone, and make the best of her way to Francisco, who would be waiting at some distance, while I finished what she had begun.

" This was, when I found all safe, to steal from my lurking-place with his child, who had also a dose to quiet it; and, having exchanged him for the young count, to set fire to a distant part of the room, that the flames might be discovered before they could affect the innocent victim I had left to their mercy.

" Notwithstanding all things favoured our success, for I had nearly completed my villainous task, the prospect of my gain no longer supported me under it, and I trembled with agony lest I should be detected descending the stairs, in which case, I well knew death awaited me. Torn also by remorse for the fate of the child and the nurse, who sat in a state of total insensibility, I determined not to leave the villa till satisfied the accident had been discovered, and again concealed myself with my little charge, though terrified lest he should betray me by crying: but the almost instant arrival of Oswald, whose voice I knew, as he alarmed the other servants, relieved my tortures, and, in the

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confusion occasioned by the cry of fire, I made my escape. Yet, when I reached my companion, a cold sweat settled on my trembling limbs, and I scarce heard her congratulate me on my safety ; but fearing that the good girl, whom I made guilty, should see my agitation, I was obliged to conquer it ; and we reached Francisco's hut in safety, by travelling part of the night, and on the following one began our journey to Zurich, which place we reached without any new difficulty ; and there I fulfilled my promise of making her my wife, after having delivered the child and a letter to a monsieur De Wilde, with whom I was to leave it. I was asked no questions about it, and returned to receive my wages, and hear what had passed at the villa, having left my wife in Switzerland till I could determine where I could take her to reside in future, as I had little doubt but she would be suspected, when the old woman should have recovered the effects of what she had taken, but little expected the curse which await-

ed me on her death: and when Francisco, with malicious transport, named our unexpected security, I sat fixed in horror. I heard also of the sufferings I had heaped on you, and my heart smote me for my ingratitude to such a master.

“ Having received my base reward, I hastened back to my wife: but the anguish I endured could not long be concealed from her; nor was her terror less than mine. We constantly expected justice would overtake us, and resolved to fly still further from its pursuit; but I could not do so without making one more visit, and then it was this destroyer of my soul again tempted me to repeat the injury I had already done you: and though I had cursed the hour I had done so, he rested not till I had again promised to complete the ruin I had already begun: but your escape, and the death of monsieur Riviers, saved me from added guilt; and I once more quitted Gascony, to enjoy what I had purchased with my innocence.

“ I was satisfied, from what I saw and

heard, the children were both safe, and taken care of; but I was a murderer, and my wife the same, for in no other light could I consider the nurse's death. That a curse followed us, our daily losses proved, for every thing failed we took in hand, trouble came on trouble, and reduced me to a jail, where I lingered two years. Oh, my lord, you know not how much the wretch before you has suffered! I endeavoured to learn if you were still alive, but to no effect; and I then resolved to seek madame Riviers, for monsieur made mademoiselle Victoria such before he died; and I knew she went into Switzerland to live with the old gentleman and the young count, and very fond she was of him: when last I saw them he was a promising youth."

"And how long since," said the count, with eagerness, "is that?"

"About ten years," he replied; "but in two more, when misfortunes pressed still harder on me, I went to madame for relief; but, as I told your lordship, she

was gone away, and the old gentleman dead. Misery then urged me to return, and join Francisco's gang; but he also had left his hut, and I have heard nothing of him since.

" You see what I now am; my crimes have made me such. A few months ago, my poor wife died, and, on her deathbed, urged me, as I loved her, never to rest till I had again endeavoured to find you out, and Heaven at last blessed my wishes. I thought I would try once more if the servants at the castle would tell me where you might be found, and was bending my weary steps thither, after a tedious journey, in which I had nearly perished for want of food, when some gentlemen stopped at an hotel, near the gate of which I was leaning, intending to solicit charity.

" One of them said—‘ What is your opinion of the trial?—do you not think De Vennuel will gain his cause?’

‘ Decidedly,’ replied the other; ‘ the count is a very worthy fellow, and I shall

rejoice to see him triumph over those who dare to suspect him of so base an action—to-day, however, will determine it.'

" I entreated the first person I met with to acquaint me where the count De Venniel's trial was held, and determined to be present, and try if they would heed the testimony of such a wretch—at least I could explain my own guilt, if I could not save you from the malice of others. The event has blessed my expectation—I have seen you acquitted, and relieved my own breast of a fatal secret, that bowed me with misery to the earth."

He was now so exhausted that Oswald led him to his own apartment; and having ordered the nourishment he stood in need of, and provided him with more decent apparel, desired he would remain there till the further commands of his lord relative to him were known; to whom he returned, and, as he had expected, found him overpowered by the incidents of so momentous a day as he had

passed through ; but they were not of a nature to excite the frenzied starts to which he was subject, and he feared nothing else.

Without, therefore, reverting to the success of his trial, or even to the name of Riviers, he led his mind forward to the fond hopes of recovering the lost treasure : it was the magnet to which every idea of the count was now attracted.

“ Yes, Oswald,” he said, “ we will instantly set out for Switzerland ; this monsieur De Wilde must have left some relation, who will know the fate of madame Riviers. Cruel Victoria ! could not the final destruction of a wretched father suffice thee—but my child, the only relict thy fatal sorcery had left me, must be usurped also ? But thou shalt no longer possess my soul’s fond idol, if the world yet hold him or thee !—Retain that penitent instrument of villainy, Oswald,” he continued, “ and see that due attention is paid to the recovery of his health, which appears sinking fast : we may have much

oecasion for him yet, and, at all events, he has claims on my gratitude I can never repay for this elucidation of a mystery that has often added to the horrors derived from sources but too well known. I also will retire to my bed, for the fatigue of body and mind this day endured far exceeds what my debilitated frame is equal to."

And Oswald, having conducted him to his chamber, left him for a moment, to satisfy himself as to the identity of the man, whose destitute and miserable appearance had so far disguised his person, that he could form no likeness of any servant who had ever lived in the household: but the other domestics, who considered him the herald of peace to their beloved lord, if not his preserver in the late trial, had already surrounded him with their kind offices, and not only relieved the wants of nature by a liberal supply of every dainty, but so thoroughly cleansed and altered his appearance, that themselves, as well as Oswald, in the wan and pallid face of Frede-

rick Clairville, were no longer at a loss to trace the features of a groom once in the service of their lord.

Oswald had hitherto been so fully employed, that little leisure was allowed him to indulge his own reflections on this important discovery ; and he returned to his lord's apartment, in full hope that, finding him asleep, a favourable opportunity would be presented for his so doing ; but that hope was chilled by disappointment. The alternate sensations of joy and pain which the count had endured for the last five hours must have shaken a firm constitution—his could less sustain it; and he found him not only indisposed, but with every symptom of an approaching fever, which the physician, for whom he sent, instantly confirmed, but added—" As it is the effect of his agitated mind, in which a dawn of hope now beams, I trust its duration will be short, though all depends on his being kept perfectly composed ;" orders which his faithful servants, with unremitting attention, obeyed.

But the count's impatience baffled his recovery; nor was it till the expiration of many days his anxious solicitude was rewarded by even a distant prospect of amendment; and then the weak state to which he was reduced left every thing to dread from a relapse: but reason had no sooner resumed its empire, than, conscious how much depended on his own exertions, he aided the endeavours of every one interested in his returning health, by suppressing, as much as possible, the reflections that intruded on his long-harassed mind, and had at last obtained permission from his medical attendants to prepare for his intended journey, on a promise of his travelling with the utmost precaution to avoid fatigue.

As he wished to take Clairville with him, an offer was made him of entering again into his service, and accepted, not only with every token of gratitude, but contrition also for his past offences.

Every thing thus arranged, Oswald was one evening called from his lord's room,

to see a person who had pressing business with the count, and though told of his indisposition, refused to leave the castle till he had been admitted to his presence. Instantly conjecturing he might convey some news of the lost Ethelwald, he hastened himself to see the messenger, who still waited in the hall, and inquired his commands, alleging the count was not allowed to see any one in his present state.

"Then I may e'en travel back," said the man, in a surly voice, "since the intelligence I bring is much too good to be retailed."

Oswald replied, he trusted humanity would prevent his being so parsimonious of any comfort he could impart to his lord, whose sorrows demanded every alleviation from those whom chance, or their own inclination, empowered them to afford.

"Why then am I denied admittance," he returned, "when I have said my own lips alone must reveal what I have to impart, and that to his private ear?"

Oswald replied, his indisposition had obliged him to refuse seeing company, but as his business was so urgent, he would return and know the count's pleasure.

He then conducted the strange guest to another apartment, while he hastened to communicate what had passed to his lord.

"What can it mean?" he said, with rising emotion: "surely, Oswald, the crisis of my destiny is at hand, and the spell thus broken, all will in time be explained. Perhaps he comes to speak of my poor Ethelwald; let me then see him, for I am now equal to the tide of joy such information would bring me."

Oswald feared not; but, little less impatient to have his own surmises confirmed, he again sought the man, who followed him in silence to the presence of the count, and having conducted him thither, left the room, but had scarcely closed the door when he started at the suggestion of mere imagination, that perhaps he had exposed him to danger in so doing, if this

stranger should be an instrument of the wretch Francisco—it might even be himself, and his secret purpose to destroy the count by his own hand.

For a few minutes he ruminated on the probability of its being so; and, while terror of the consequence prevented his proceeding, a dread that his return might be attributed to impertinent curiosity by his lord restrained him. His irresolution at last ended in a determination to seek Clairville, and ask him for a description of Francisco, that he might judge if it corresponded with that of this man, whose appearance justified the supposition he entertained of him, since every lineament of his dark and sallow countenance, together with his uncouth dress and savage manners, fully indicated the ruffian: but it answered not the picture drawn by Clairville of Francisco, and his thoughts became still more bewildered.

In the mean time his lord had far more reason to be satisfied with his visitor; and,

while he listened to his errand, heeded not the ruffian form that stood before him.

" You have business with me, friend," said De Vennuel, when his servant, having introduced him, left them together.

" I have," he answered ; " and though my appearance may not be very favourable, the news I bring will perhaps make me somewhat welcome."

The count replied, external appearance seldom biassed his opinion, which was always founded on his better knowledge of the character with whom he had to deal.

" But even that is not always necessary to be known," said the man, " and at any rate, in the present instance, will speak little in my behalf, for I am a robber."

De Vennuel looked at him, while he proceeded.

" Choose, therefore, if you will hear more, or dismiss me for my character's sake."

" Persuaded it was not merely to explain this you sought me," he returned,

“ I would learn the purport of your present business, and wait the desired explanation.”

“ Hast thou not lost a youth whom thy bounty cherished ?”

“ I have,” the count impatiently exclaimed; “ and thou wouldest tell me of his safety ? Oh, there is no form under which I would not bless the preserver of my poor Ethelwald !”

“ But I am not that ; yet I have been with him, and can tell you where he now is, or at least where Francisco took him.”

A faintness seized the count at a repetition of that dreadful name, and he would have said—“ Again the accursed villain has battered at my peace,” but he wished not to explain his knowledge of him till his visitor was better known, therefore begged to hear how far he was acquainted with the situation of his young friend, and if he could put him on a method of discovering his present residence ?

“ That will be no easy task,” said the ruffian, for such he had owned himself to

be ; “ and having done so, a still harder one to persuade his father to give him up, unless you can satisfy his avarice, which is unbounded.”

“ But has he really, in this man whom you call Francisco, found a father ?” inquired his auditor, with agitation he could no longer conceal.

“ Truly,” answered the other, “ I think otherwise; but he claims him as a son, and you best can tell on what foundation.”

De Venmuel had fatal reasons for believing them too firm for him to dispute, and that he must for ever resign all hopes of again recovering the lamented youth, since allied not only to his sworn enemy, but a villain, whom even to notice in the person of his child, was a disgrace to which he could never submit.

But his affectionate heart had still to receive a pang more severe, from the sequel of his informer’s intelligence, which explained all that had passed since the removal of Ethelwald from Breslaw to the eve of his departure for Switzerland, sup-

pressing the information of that being their destination ; for it was Montaldo, whom the hope of reward had led to supersede Francisco in the relation he knew it was his intention to be himself the bearer of, when opportunity and his own conscience suited.

" I had long meditated," he continued, " on a determination made to leave the banditti, for it was Francisco's nature to rule despotic, but not mine to obey : yet we are sworn not to betray each other ; therefore, before I proceed, you also must swear to protect my life, and not take any steps towards bringing my comrades into danger, for only on those terms will I reveal the route they have taken."

This the count readily promised to do, having resolved his regard for Ethelwald should be the father's security, cruelly as he had wronged him : yet to find this father was of consequence, since he possibly knew the residence of madame Riviers; he therefore did not hesitate, and, in return,

was made acquainted with their journey into Switzerland.

"But I have," added Montaldo, "still another motive for this visit;" and he drew from his bosom a ~~packet~~, carefully sealed, and addressed—"To the respected count *De Vennuel*," which he laid before the astonished nobleman, who, in one moment, saw the writing was not Ethelwald's.

"To convince you I can be just," said the robber, "let these untried seals prove that neither my curiosity or hope of plunder have triumphed over my fidelity; and, when you hear Montaldo reprobed as a villain, do him the justice to ascribe one honourable instance to his wish of serving an innocent victim, for such he is whom you call Ethelwald, to me better known as Henrico De Roseville."

He then recounted the singular manner in which he had gained the packet, and which, though designed for the count, had never been intended for his delivering. He began by reverting to the death of Ja-

queline, and the suggestions of his companions that she had concealed property in the north tower.

"I had never," he continued, "seen her near the spot during my visits to it, which were frequent; for I had the same motives for going there they attributed to her, having concealed several articles of value by means of a trapdoor I had accidentally discovered in the ruin; but, as it could never, if that was the case, benefit her, I resolved to make a search, and this packet proves my success. By closely examining the floor, in a part of which my own property was secured, I discovered a second door, and on my moving it, found a box that I trusted would repay my labour; but it contained only what I now deliver into your hands, and to do which I have travelled on foot from the Black Forest. I easily found out your residence, because Francisco has often entertained us with his knowledge of you, and the power a point of honour in which you were engaged gave him over you."

"Villain!" said the count, thrown off his guard by the base assertion, "I defy his power! The laws of my country have acquitted me with justice, and I am no longer responsible to any man for the action of which he dares accuse me!"

"That also I learned on my road," replied Montaldo, "and I hope the satisfaction you feel will be increased by the contents of that, whatever they may be;" and he glanced his eye as he spoke on the still unopened parcel, as if to remind him he was still unrewarded for its safety.

The count saw his motive, and eager to examine what it contained, which he wished to do alone, demanded how he could sufficiently recompense him for the trouble he had taken in conveying it thus far?

"I stipulate no terms but my own safety," he replied, "and that you have already secured; therefore, if your honour thinks me entitled to any thing more, your own generosity needs no instruction; but, be it what it may, you will never again hear of Montaldo."

“ If that is the case,” returned the count, “ you must retire and take some refreshment, while I examine this mysterious bequest, that I may rate my acknowledgments by the contents. For your information of Ethelwald I already stand indebted more than I can express; it must ever bind the count De Venuiel to render you any service you may require, that does not militate against his own honour, or the duty he owes society at large.”

“ I understand you,” answered Montaldo; “ but will accept some refreshment, whilst I wait your further orders.”

Oswald, whose impatience exceeded all bounds, having twice reached the room-door, was at last, to his inexpressible joy, summoned; but surprise succeeded every other sensation, when he beheld the still closed packet on the table, and received his master’s commands to pay every attention to the stranger’s accommodation: this he did, while, with an inquiring eye, he watched his every motion.

But the count was far otherwise engaged: he had scarcely opened the envelope, when a small case dropped from the folded papers it contained, and, eager to ascertain what it could be, he opened the clasp, which was curiously formed, and beheld, with a mingled sentiment of awe and surprise, in the miniature it concealed, a resemblance he could not for a moment doubt—it was that of the esteemed and long-lamented Sigismund Riviers. With wild disorder he gazed on the mild and placid features of this early friend, and they spoke daggers to his own mind.

“Great God!” he exclaimed, “for what purpose have I received this precious deposit? Surely not to reproach me for his brother’s blood; for, had Sigismund lived, he would have disowned the monster who could triumph, as he did, on every duty, and violate every law of friendship and humanity.”

So bewildered was imagination by the variety of conjectures succeeding each other, that he sat with his eyes rivetted on

the picture, totally forgetful of the papers that were intended to elucidate the apparent mystery; but having at last attracted his attention, he carefully closed the valued case, and began a further search in regard to their purport.

There were two letters, each sealed and directed in the same hand, to himself, and with trembling suspense he opened the most heavy; but, instead of an epistle, as he had expected, it presented a small pocketbook, in which were many memorandums written in elegant Spanish, and in its side recess, a letter addressed to monsieur Riviers.

Happily, on the return of Americus from Spain, De Venniel had, by way of amusement, studied the language sufficiently to translate it with tolerable accuracy; and now, without allowing reflection to interrupt his employment, he proceeded to the perusal of it; and having seen the signature of Don Pedello, with increased emotion read as follows:—

" I send thee, Americus, my chiefest treasure ; and, I need not add, be careful of the trust, for at thy hands I shall expect them. When thy care, and the friendship of the count and countess De Vennuel, aided by your salutary climate, shall have restored madame Riviers to her former health, lest the good society to which they are hastening should make them unmindful of the lapse of time, which, to me, will be tedious, I have retained a hostage for their return, and will endeavour, in the smiles of my little Josephine, to forget the absence of her beloved parents, and their infant Sigismund, whom I am about committing to a dangerous element ; yet they tell me it is essential to that health I would preserve with my last earthly possession. May Heaven therefore guard the blessings it gave to sooth my winter of age, and restore them in safety to my impatient wishes !

" To the count and countess De Vennuel you will say every thing needful ;

but I have already taxed your brother and his lovely Josephine with my affectionate wishes for their lasting happiness, in which I have not been unmindful of yours; since all that are dear to the loved heralds of my remembrance have a constant claim on the prayers of

“ DON PEDELLO.”

This letter did not terminate the torch of suspense; and, having given a sigh to the departed worth of those whom it concerned, he eagerly unfolded the last and only resource. To the writing he was still a stranger, and on its purport he rested for a knowledge, which recollection denied, of the writer, as the signature was equally unknown; but it was addressed to him, and, with alternate sensations, he perused the contents:—

“ Only the fearful uncertainty,” it began, “ that this narrative will ever

reach him for whom it is intended, could damp the joy with which I embrace the only means left of relieving my oppressed and broken heart. Yes, my lord, though the cold earth will have closed the sorrows of Jaqueline before you can recover it, she will die in peace if this last satisfaction is not denied her. But I must not dwell long on the reflection, for I have much to tell you, and little opportunity of committing it to paper. Though it is not a history of myself I would lay before your lordship, it is requisite to tell you I was always the child of misfortune, and, for many years, have been that of sorrow.

" My father, never rich, had still sufficient to ensure the comforts of existence, and support the wife whose early death laid the foundation of all his distress, and deprived me of a guardian, who, if living, had saved the hapless Jaqueline from a dreadful fate : but I never knew a mother's care, and I owe all the advantages I derived from learning, to the pious instructions of my only parent. Despair for the

loss of a wife so loved robbed him for some months of reason, and he revived only to know Heaven had deprived him of her, while fraud and injustice swept away his little possessions, and left me only as a wreck of what he once could boast. To drown remembrance, he fled from his native province, and sought a refuge among the happy peasantry who owned the count De Venniel for their lord, and where, in a humble capacity, he taught my infant years the love of virtue, rearing my childhood with a father's care but ill rewarded; yet he never knew the extent of his child's guilt, for Heaven in mercy spared him, while I have justly suffered; for I presume not to arraign its wisdom, or question its justice.

" Nature had not given me a share of beauty that could rate me above my rustic companions in personal attraction, nor sufficient to make me vain; but the instructions of my father, who was well taught, had given me sentiments far beyond what I met with in my associates, and I sought

among them, but in vain, for a congenial mind : it was at last found in the seducer destined to destroy the structure raised by a parent's fond solicitude.

" Monsieur Riviers traced our obscure dwelling, and rested not till he had bereft it of that innocence which once gladdened every passing hour. He was all that my ardent imagination had pictured, and I looked up to him as a superior being, whom I could worship, but dared not believe a sentiment beyond that admiration could pass the barrier fate had placed between us. He first destroyed it to raise a more insuperable one; for the innocence which once gave me even a superiority over him was levelled by his dissimulation, and I became the victim of his seduction. But a moment convinced me of the horrors of my situation. His wife, I knew, I never could be ; and it was a conviction that brought less agony than the knowledge of what my father would endure when my guilt was made known : in addition to this, was the reproach of that

neighbourhood, where my hitherto unsullied character had procured me the friendship and esteem of all with whom I was acquainted; and, without knowing by what means it could be effected, I implored the destroyer of my peace to save me from the impending destruction. He was not long in devising a remedy I too rashly adopted; for, in a few days, I was introduced to a man who liberally offered to lull every sense of shame in this distracted bosom by making me his wife—Dreadful sacrifice! But every repugnance I felt on the first interview, every terror of future consequence, in passing years with a man from whose appearance I revolted, was swallowed up in the greater evil of the humiliation that awaited me, and the misery I should inflict on so good a father. Without deliberation, therefore (for I ventured not to reflect), my consent was given, and, to the astonishment of that father and every other person, I persisted in becoming the wife of Francisco de Roseville."

"Heavens!" articulated the count, as

34. THE BRAVO OF BOHEMIA.

the unconscious paper dropped from his hands, “then all will be explained; the power of this infernal demon is at last broken, and my knowledge of him will at least preserve me from his future spells.”

Again he resumed the unfinished letter, and proceeded with the narrative. It continued—“Unbounded affection for my seducer, and unconquerable hatred for the husband I had married, were the contending passions that actuated my now-guilty heart, and disturbed every thought, till the immediate danger of my deceased parent, by demanding the attention of his wretched daughter, left me dead to every other consideration. A malignant fever had seized him; and, notwithstanding my fervent prayers that its infection might extend to my polluted frame, I was compelled to survive the fatal moment that consigned him to the peaceful grave, and then dragged from every former acquaintance, to reside in a small cottage on the borders of a wood, many miles from the village of which I had been some years an

inhabitant. Nor was it long before my sorrowing heart discovered, though Francisco passed as a woodman, it was merely a disguise that he assumed for plundering, when an opportunity offered, any traveller who came in his way; and many were the unpleasant scenes I had to encounter in that solitary place.

" Monsieur Riviers sometimes visited us; but all his attention was now paid to my husband, with whom he was particularly intimate—a circumstance that often excited my surprise. Several times I had observed them in close conference, and though I could not judge what, felt convinced all was not right. Francisco had several favourite acquaintance, who shared in all his enterprises, and the one most his confident was more than once consulted when monsieur Riviers had left him. But a few days explained the whole, for you were brought wounded to our abode, and I then feared dangerously. But I need not dwell on these particulars more than to assert, Francisco and his companions were

the robbers who beat your lordship, both of whom, I am well convinced, were disappointed in your escaping with life. But the reward given by your noble father somewhat satisfied him ; yet the failure of his plot obliged him to fly, as he dared not stand the examination which he expected would follow, when the affair was made known.

" We then removed to the neighbourhood of ——, where we resided some months ; and, from that, Francisco took possession of a hut (for it could be called no better) on the borders of the bay, and entered into partnership with a fisherman, who resided a short distance from it. Here he again followed his former practices, but with more security, since their plunder was derived from wrecks floating near the shore, or treasure which the angry waves threw on the sand near our dwelling : but the more he gained, the more unbounded was his avarice. For myself, I had become so familiar with the misery inflicted by his ill treatment and the life I led, that no-

thing but the love I felt for the only child I had reared, of three, could, at that time, have reconciled me to existence : but my cup of affliction was not then half filled, and my trials far short of what was yet in store for me.

“ Again I became a mother ; and Francisco expressed more regard for this child than any I had ever borne him, though it extended only to inquiries after it, and a strict charge that I would be careful of its health : but he seldom took it in his arms, or appeared to feel the transport of a father interested for his children. Our near residence to the sea made storms familiar to us ; and though I always shuddered when I beheld the dreadful element, heard the howling winds pierced by shrieks of distress, and saw the foaming waves toss the shattered barks to and fro, Francisco thought only of the profit it would produce, and watched, with hungry satisfaction, the near approach of any prize that he could reach with safety from the shore.

“ A dreadful hurricane had, one night,

shaken our habitation, and threatened not only destruction to every vessel exposed to its fury, but the same fate to all near that part of the land where we resided. In breathless terror I listened, as the loud thunder rolled over our heads, and expected every dreadful flash that followed would consume our dwelling: even Francisco wished it would abate; but I had clasped my child to my beating breast, and waited long in expectation of that moment. The tempest at length abated; and no sooner had it in the least subsided, than I was left to reflect on what I had endured, and might still have to expect, comfortless and alone, for Francisco had other employments, and looked only to the spoils he should reap from such a storm.

"The rain still poured in torrents, and mingling with the more dreadful sound of rushing waves, filled me with horror: but all was forgot by the unexpected return of Francisco and his companion, who brought home with them the body of a gentleman that had been washed on the shore. Fran-

cisco had also something in his arms wrapped up, which I took for a bundle, till, in his usual surly way, he desired I would look to the child, for such it proved, while he saw what life remained in the man. They had laid him down in his drenched garments, and poured some liquor into his throat ; but the only sign of existence was a faint pulse, and in less than an hour that also was gone, without his having shewn another symptom. In the mean time, I had unfolded the mantle, and never did eyes behold a more lovely babe."

The count, no longer able to suppress the emotions he felt, clasped his hands, and in agony exclaimed—"Just powers ! have I then fostered the orphan child of Sigismund Riviers ? Yes—it must be so ! These papers, picture, letter—all, all declare my lost Ethelwald is not the wretched offspring of the villain who has stolen him from me. But here," and he sunk on his knees—"here, Riviers, friend of my happier days, I swear solemnly never to know rest or comfort till I have recovered

thy lost boy.—Ruffian fiend!" he continued, with frenzied emotion, "nor mountains, nor hell itself, shall longer screen thee from my pursuit; and having found thee, racks and tortures shall wring from thy expiring soul where thou hast concealed my Henry, my Sigismund!—then will I glut my eager eyes with the agonies thou wilt endure, and heed thee not, when thy parched lips shall implore mercy at my hands, for thou hadst none on me—not that the worst pang of thy convulsed nature can equal those I have felt."

Faint and exhausted with the exertion of his yet weak powers, he sunk senseless on the floor; and when Oswald, whose mind was still far from satisfied, returned, he believed his lord was dying, and that the doubtful stranger had, by some means, contributed to his death, notwithstanding he had left him apparently well only a few minutes before. But when he would have quitted the room for assistance, the count, in a faint voice, repeated his name, and he flew to replace him on the sofa, from

whence he had fallen. On his recovering, he pointed to the case; and Oswald supposing, from the motion, that he wished it opened, turned the clasp, but had no sooner beheld the painting, than his agitation nearly equalled that of his lord, who exclaimed—"That is the father of Ethelwald."

"What," said the trembling Oswald, mistrusting his own senses, "can your lordship mean? I see it is monsieur Sigismund: but how—did not they all perish?"

"I will tell you," said the count; but his faintness returned, and finding himself unequal to talking, or even to resume the perusal of his papers, he could only add—"It is a wonderful discovery; but place these papers in the cabinet, and when I have recovered myself, let me again see the bearer of them."

To effect that recovery, every attention was requisite; and some hours had passed before he could speak to Montaldo, who was dismissed with a reward that fully com-

pensed him for the speculative journey he had taken, and far exceeded his expectations.

The count then, in part, related to Oswald the contents of his packet ; and, anxious himself to learn the sequel, had again recourse to Jaqueline's narrative.

" It was," she added, " a boy, whose age, from appearance, must have been nearly that of my own infant, who was also a boy, and by far the handsomest child I had given birth to ; but the dress of the little stranger was unlike any thing I had ever seen in make, and very rich.

" My first care was to warm its limbs, nearly stiffened by the cold and wet ; nor was it till I felt it press the breast I had conveyed to its little lips, I could dare believe it would survive the hapless parent who lay at my feet, for such I judged he was. Every effort to recover him had been used in vain ; and I fancied both Francisco and his neighbour were better pleased by the failure than they would have been by the success of those efforts.

" As they were eager to return to the shore, they purposed carrying the now lifeless corpse to an adjoining out-house, imagining I should be terrified at remaining alone with it, for except the children, I had no companion : but this I entreated they would defer doing, till they came back, for, dreadful as was my situation, the faint hope that the warmth of the room might yet recover him urged my assuring them I was by no means alarmed, and that I would watch for the returning life I yet hoped to discover ; and my request was complied with, though my expectations were made a subject for their ridicule ; and in their haste to see what more the waves had spared, little or no notice was taken of the lovely boy, who, unconscious of the change, smiled as he sucked the nourishment he had been used to receive from the mother who, it was too probable, had perished in the storm : and the interest I took in his fate alone supported me under the terror I felt, when I considered my dreary situation, and glanced my eye to-

wards the dead body which lay near me. They had drawn an elegant watch from his pocket; and this, with a ring taken from his finger, and some gold coin that proved to be Spanish, had been left in my care.— How ardently I wished he might recover, to claim the property! but hoped, if he did not, it would at least reconcile Francisco to our bringing up the child thus preserved from the tempest; for to his humanity I dared not trust it, and I blessed the Providence that had enabled me, from being at that time a nurse, to cherish the little stranger.

“ In about two hours they returned, and inquired how my companion was going on? Stung by their brutality, I replied abruptly—‘ He sleeps in peace.’

‘ But the youngster does not appear to have been so fortunate,’ exclaimed Francisco.

“ I looked at him, as if to inquire the purport of his words; and he continued—‘ Children are burthensome articles,—and dangerous,’ added the fisherman who ac-

companied him, ‘for they tell tales. To be sure, this is too young to make much out of his story ; and, as luck would have it for us, there is no one to tell it for him ;’ —‘therefore,’ said the wretch whom I called husband, ‘he will be quite as well put to sleep also.’

“ In agony I had never before endured, I swore, if he destroyed the innocent blood of such a helpless victim, I would proclaim the foul murder.

‘ Repeat that threat,’ he vociferated, ‘ and I will, in the same moment, both sacrifice thee and him !’

“ I knew the extent of his savage nature, and when I beheld his uplifted arm, my resolution vanished, and I threw myself before him, to entreat he would spare the infant’s existence, which the merciless storm had done.

‘ Yes, worse chance,’ he answered, ‘ for us, who have already enough to support : however, as you are such a fool as to wish an addition to your own trouble, I tell you

there is but one condition on which I will spare his life.'

'And what,' I eagerly demanded, 'is that? Name it, and there is nothing I will not do to save you from the guilt of shedding innocent blood.'

'Why, as to that,' he returned, 'I should feel little remorse, for the brat is already more than half dead, seeing I am not so squeamish as you are: but, if he lives, you must bind yourself in a sacred oath never to reveal the business of this night, for it has been a glorious one to us; and, above all, that you will bring up this boy, for such I see it is, with your own, and as your own: also, that his not being such shall never pass your lips; for the moment thou wouldest dare to tell the tale, I will swear thine own hand destroyed the remaining life of his father, whom I had saved from the storm, and left in thy care when I went to secure his property, that is now our own: but betray us, and the crime shall lie so close to thy charge, that it shall never be believed thou couldst be innocent.'

" My soul sickened as I heard the dreadful threat, and I thought myself fainting ; but terror lest they should take advantage of my insensibility raised my agitated spirits, and I eagerly bound myself by the oath they administered—happy, on any terms, to secure the smiling boy, whose artless looks seemed to thank me for the sacrifice of my peace. Such it was ; for too late I found my precious charge was the nephew of monsieur De Riviers—a discovery I owed to chance, but carefully concealed from the knowledge of Francisco, who now told me the extent of the dreadful devastation.

' Many dead bodies,' he said, ' were floating on the surface of the sea, which plainly proved some vessel had foundered ; and that he also believed they had sent a boat out, in hopes of reaching the shore, for that on going down to the beach, they had seen the gentleman whom they had brought in buffeting the waves, while he endeavoured to support a fellow-sufferer, round whom his arm was twined : that

they saw them sink twice ; and then it was some minutes before a tremendous billow threw them with violence on the shore, when they saw his companion was a lady, ‘ but dead enough,’ he added, ‘ before she touched the land, and her husband (for, by the child, I suppose he was such) too far gone to know any thing about it : yet, as he shewed some little life, we took the child, who was wrapped up as you saw it, and fastened to her dress by strings, which we loosened, and brought them to the fire, having first left her in a place of safety till we could return to see what property she had about her which was worth fetching in. It was mostly in trinkets,’ he continued—‘ and here is a small pocket-book, which had better be destroyed, when you have taken off the gold lock ; for the inside is all written in a foreign tongue, so can be of no use to us ;’ and he threw it in my lap, as he took it from some far more valuable articles.

“ To avoid suspicion, I laid it carelessly on one side, saying, I would presently strip

off the lock, and burn it; but I secretly resolved first to examine the contents, not without a hope it might lead to a knowledge of the unhappy family thus destroyed. I had little to fear from the long continuance of Francisco at home, for they had full employment; and their first step was to prepare a grave for the corpses, which they now removed to the adjoining out-house, till it was ready to receive them. They next returned with the cold and lovely form of the lady, over whom my bursting heart shed many tears. I looked at her, and then at the beauteous babe she had been so careful to reserve for such a fate as now awaited him: but I had little time for my meditations—Francisco's unfeeling heart despised such weakness, as he termed it; and I was told that was not the purpose for which it was brought there, but that he judged I might find some use for the clothes, which were of none to them; therefore I might either strip the body, or let them bury it as it was.

‘That,’ I said, ‘would be an injustice to the child, who would need apparel; and I certainly would turn it to some account.’

“But I had a stronger motive; these very clothes might lead to a future discovery of what my lips were sworn to conceal. With trembling hands I removed every article of her dress; and happily they amused themselves during my employment by drinking, as my agitation could not otherwise have escaped their notice, when in her bosom I discovered the picture I now enclose. Joy that it had escaped their mercenary hands, and terror lest I should be detected in concealing it, almost rendered me incapable of doing so; but it was safely deposited, and my melancholy task ended, for, having wrapped the body in some useless linen, I consigned it to them for burial; and they no sooner left me for that purpose, than I examined the treasure of which I had so unexpectedly become possessed. The pocket-book, as he had said, was nearly filled with writing, but in a language I did not un-

derstand ; and, having vainly looked for a sentence I could make out, was beginning, with a disappointed air, to remove the lock ; but, in so doing, touched a spring, which threw open a private pocket, and discovered a letter directed to monsieur Riviers. Motionless with surprise, I gazed on the cover, and with a hope that it might still explain more, I tore it open ; but, though in a different hand, the language was still the same : and, vexed at having my expectations thus defeated, I returned it to the secret pocket, having first taken off the lock, that it might be believed I had, as desired, destroyed it.

" My second treasure was next drawn from its concealment, and fully confirmed my opinion that these unfortunate sufferers were, at least, relations of monsieur Riviers, if not really his brother, of whom I had heard much talk in my happier days, though I had never seen him—an opinion strengthened by the strong resemblance the picture bore to my seducer. This

child, thus destined to appear the son of a poor fisherman, or, what was much worse, a robber, was doubtless entitled, if not the heir to possessions, from which he was for ever excluded by my fatal oath. But I have dwelt long on this mournful recital, to prove more clearly the truth of what I have yet to assert.

" Every day served to endear the hapless boy to me; but that, like every other blessing I had possessed in my wretched life, was torn from me when least expected.

" A young man shortly after came to reside with us, though I knew not for what purpose; but soon discovered Francisco and he had secrets, and were plotting some scheme, which, I feared, boded little good to those whom it did concern. In less than a week this supposition was verified by Francisco saying he had a fair opportunity of providing for one of the boys, whom he now noticed less every day; indeed, he was so little at home, and so fully employed when there, that of the little

stranger he knew nothing ; adding—‘ As it will be the making of him, I shall send my own ; and Henrico,’ for so he had named the orphan, ‘ can supply his place to you.’

‘ Send him where ?’ I articulated, in breathless suspense—‘ and for what purpose ?’

‘ To provide for him, as I told you before,’ he replied sullenly ; ‘ therefore prepare him for a journey to the count De Vennuiel’s.’

“ Unable to comprehend what he meant, I attempted to expostulate, but it was in vain ; and all I could learn was, that the count, having lost his son, my little Edward was to be thrown on his bounty, but by what means I was not to be satisfied ; and he left me with a command that the child should be in readiness when he sent Frederick for it. This was our new guest, and from whom I hoped to gain more satisfactory intelligence : but I had a powerful contest to decide, in which duty and nature struggled hard.

" An opportunity offered of at least shielding Henrico from the uncertain state of existence to which we were subject, and placing him in the hands of those better calculated to promote his future interest, as well as happiness: it was a duty I owed him, for the wrongs I had, though unintentionally, done him. But these advantages were offered for my own child, whose welfare ought, by the laws of nature, to be the first consideration. Then I must resign a mother's comforts, forego his smiling innocence, part with him for ever; and this I could not resolve to do; added to which was a conviction Francisco might in time repent the indulgence he had allowed me of keeping Henrico, and force him out a wanderer, from even our rude home. All conspired to promote my secret wish of reversing the commands I had received, by substituting the young stranger for my Edward—a task not very difficult, since convinced I could easily deceive a father who paid so little attention to his family, that during the period I

had nursed Henrico he had never once examined his features; and of his own son he knew little more, avarice, and a thirst for plunder, actuating every passion of his sordid soul. At length, therefore, I finally determined on adopting my own plan; and as he had desired, by way of deception, the child should be dressed in the clothes of our infant charge, I prepared to commit the dear boy to what, I trusted, was a better fate, and ardently implored Heaven that his lovely features and helpless state might raise him warm friends in that family on which I found he was to be imposed.

" When Frederick called for him, he produced a powder, which I was desired to give him, adding, when he saw me irresolute, it was only to keep him sleeping during the journey, and was perfectly harmless.

" To my entreaties that he would tell me every particular respecting my child, and what had induced Francisco so cruelly to tear him from me, he replied, it struck

him as being somewhat unnatural for parents to part so easily with their children ; but he understood, Franciseo thought it was a good opportunity of making his son's fortune, as the count, having lost his own, would gladly adopt him.

" My reluctance, when the moment of parting came, was not feigned, for I loved him with sincere affection ; and when, at last, Frederick caught him from my arms, I sunk in agony on my chair, till the cries of my Edward, who wanted sustenance, recalled my recollection ; and I then found how much harder would have been the task of resigning him, and rejoiced in the deception which still secured my boy a mother's care, without, as I hoped, injuring his little companion. Still I could not help wishing the first interview with Francisco over, nor restrain something like a secret dread of a discovery, should he interrogate me about the children. But Heaven had reserved a dreadful security, for which I was not prepared.

" Frederick had only left me about three

hours, when my child was seized with the most frightful convulsions. His black and distorted features wrung me with agony: and, while I hung over him in wild and frantic sorrow, I believed it a judgment on me for the deceit I had practised towards his father, who returned but in time to see the last effort of expiring nature. For myself, lost in the excess of my own poignant affliction, I heeded not that, in addition to Frederick, a young woman, whom they called his wife, had come back with them, accompanied by an infant, whose cries first reminded me that I was bereft of mine; and my distress of mind rendered me regardless of the improbable tale they told; nor was it till I felt relieved by their removal, for the presence of the child was tortures, that returning recollection convinced me some dark plot had been executed, the extent of which I could not surmise. Indeed, I was become indifferent to every thing, and life an added burden.

"I had still, it is true, a child, but his

harsh and uncouth manners so much resembled the husband whom I more than ever abhorred, that I dare not assert I ever loved him like those I had lost ; and he has since rewarded me accordingly, for there is no unkindness of which he is not capable; and I have, from his infancy, rather reared him as a curse than a blessing.

“ Succeeding years saw me a melancholy inhabitant of the hut, during which I heard, in part, of your lordship’s sufferings, and the loss of your countess ; and that, having murdered your friend, you were obliged to fly from Gascony, and had taken the child with you.

“ My chief pleasure was now derived from contemplating the different aspects of the bay, as its white waves washed the shore ; and though seldom a week passed in which these men, who had no views beyond, were not fortunate in securing some prize that had been drifted on the sand, yet I never afterwards, during my stay, experienced such a scene as I have already described.

“ Our next removal was to the dreary forest of which I have now been six years a solitary resident—I say solitary, for I have, in the day, no society, and, at night, only that of a lawless banditti, of whom Francisco is the principal, and Hubert, my only child, by his own inclination and a father’s will, an associate.

“ Judge then, my lord, the situation of the wretched Jaqueline. But your commiseration will avail her little, when you have read the sad story of her life : yet she feels a pleasure in transcribing it for your perusal, for it is an unexpected relief to her oppressed heart, which, weighed down by its severe trials, was fast sinking to the earth, when, ruminating on the secret, it occurred, that though my lips were sworn never to proclaim the tale, the oath extended not to my pen, and that, having committed the whole to paper, if some opportunity might occur of transmitting it to your lordship, I should then die in peace ; for if the son of monsieur Riviers lives,

and such Henrico must be, it is right you, of all others, should know who he is.

* * * * *

“ Four years more have nearly passed over this miserable head, and still I live—live without the only ray of comfort I ask of Heaven—the means of conveying this. Of the wretches who form the band for whom I have daily to provide, there is but one I can, as a last resource, ask to take charge of my concealed treasure, and his manners are so severe, I tremble to make the attempt: yet he is not, cannot be such a villain as the rest, and I will think of it. The little pocketbook, and, above all, the picture, which was the resemblance of him whom I saw die in the hut, I have carefully preserved, as testimonies of Henrico not being the son of Francisco—a truth the letter may confirm, and which I assert with an oath most solemn, for it has no witness but my God.

* * * * *

“ Heaven in mercy has heard my prayers

—Henrico still lives: but for what? Francisco has traced him, and, like a beast of prey, will drag this innocent victim to this detested den: but I shall see him, and, as my own, be allowed the privilege of clasping him to this anxious heart, that has so long beat for his welfare. I can also commit the precious deposit to his care, and urge him to fly to your protection, when these eyes are closed for ever, and that cannot be long—a happy release, to which only my weary thoughts are directed, and which, my task done, I will hail with transport. To-morrow Francisco is expected — Dreaded, yet wished-for return! Then I cannot write more; but it is needless, for I have said all that is requisite to convince a less liberal and enlightened mind that this is not meant to deceive him. The picture too—haply the beloved youth may have grown up a likeness to it. I am all joy, all anxiety, at the prospect of once more beholding him, and revealing the place where my packet is concealed, properly directed for your lord-

ship : no one is privy to the recess in which it is safe from every eye ; and, when mine are closed, it shall be forwarded to you. May it plead a pardon for this intrusion on your leisure—plead a pardon for the nearly exhausted

“ JAQUELINE DE ROSEVILLE.”

CHAPTER II.

WHEN no language can do justice to the feelings we would describe, silence is often more expressive ; and every description of the count's, on his perusal of Jaqueline's letter, must fall far short.

Montaldo's account fully explained the circumstances that had deranged her plan of its conveyance, and he considered the singular manner in which this man had obtained possession of it as a striking instance of that Providence whose unerring hand, he believed, was now bringing

to light every incident of his dark and mysterious destiny ; and that the appointed hour of his vengeance was at hand, to check the progress of a lawless villain. He believed; also, the wonderful discoveries that, in so short a time, had succeeded each other, were to arm him with power to combat that of his too-long-successful enemy, and be the means of bringing him to the justice he had so often and grossly violated. These sentiments soothed the perturbation of his mind ; and, notwithstanding the fate of his own child, as also that of Ethelwald, was still uncertain, he enjoyed a degree of innate comfort, to which, for twenty years, he had been a stranger.

Oswald's joy knew no bounds ; and every feature of his faithful domestics, tinged by the sorrowing shade which constantly enveloped their beloved lord, was now gladdened by the springs of hope, for it was not possible long to conceal from their knowledge the expectation raised of his son's existence. Oswald had

never doubted it, even when in the cheerless gloom that left so little for expectation to dwell on. Clairville even felt a mitigation of what he suffered; and, could he erase from memory the murder to which he had been instrumental, would have shared the general happiness.

The impatient travellers at length commenced the journey from which so much was expected, and to obtain which they were provided with no other information than Montaldo's—that Francisco had retired to a mountain near Lucern, in Switzerland, whither he was accompanied by Ethelwald, and Clairville's assertion that madame Riviers had once resided in the canton of Zurich, in the same country. To this important spot, therefore, every hope pointed; and the count had reached Solothurn, on the road to Lucern, without having adopted any plan for his farther pursuit of the beloved fugitives, when Oswald ventured to name the strict provision he had made relative to his travelling without proper rest: but expectation out-

stripped every other consideration, and he positively refused to remain any longer than to take some refreshment, while they obtained an exchange of horses ; but when Oswald, finding him thus resolute, inquired where they were next to proceed ? he owned he had not determined.

“ Nature, Oswald,” he said, “ would urge me first to Zurich, but friendship and the claims of Ethelwald direct my course to Lucern ; for if my Henry still lives, though I dare not indulge the thought, he is doubtless in safety, while I know not the extent of misery to which Ethelwald is exposed ; therefore we will go, good fellow, first to Lucern, be our success what it may.”

Oswald hastened the preparations for a renewal of their journey ; but at the moment the count was going to his carriage, the host entreated he would delay his departure, alleging, he would find a difficulty in proceeding, till a great funeral procession, which was just then entering the street, had passed by, adding—“ If

your lordship will honour me by walking into this room, you may see the whole."

Unwilling to hurt his feelings by a refusal, but with little curiosity to observe what the inhabitants of the hotel were crowding to behold, he followed in silence, and seated himself in a chair placed near the window for him. That it was a person of some consequence he readily imagined, by the manner in which it was conducted; but the magnificence he was taught to expect, from the eagerness of the spectators, fell far short; and when Oswald entered the apartment, he carelessly inquired whose funeral it was?

Had his observation of Oswald's countenance followed the inquiry, he would have easily perceived there was more to impart than he was prepared to hear; but he still continued to look towards the street, till the hesitation of his servant in answering excited his surprise; and again he repeated the question.

"It will interest your lordship more than you are aware," he replied; "but so

many wonderful things have of late transpired, that I trust you will not suffer this to agitate you too much; but, indeed, it is strange!"

Prepared by Oswald's preface to hear he knew not what, and unwilling to interrupt him, he sat in silent expectation while he proceeded—"It is, my lord, the funeral of—" and his voice faltered as he pronounced, "of madame Riviers."

"Great God!" said the count, starting from his chair—"then all is lost! Where am I to find my boy, if she from whom I expected to claim him is no longer capable of revealing his fate?"

"But those she has left behind may," returned Oswald.

"And who," asked his lord impatiently; "are they?—where are they taking her corpse? where can I view her relations?"

"Our host can furnish us with every particular, if your lordship will be composed enough to hear him; but, indeed, this agitation will render you very une-

qual to bear the tide of joy preparing for you."

Clasping the hand of the faithful creature who stood before him, not less agitated than himself, though from excess of pleasure, the count inquired what he would tell him ?

" Tell you," he replied, " that your servant's prayers are heard—that all he ever believed has come to pass—that my dear young lord lives, and that Oswald, having seen you happy, can die in peace!"

Here he burst into tears—every resolution made, of being cautious in the explanation he had to give of such unexpected intelligence as he had gathered from the host, vanished, when he beheld his loved lord, and his frantic joy almost rendered him incapable of attending to the situation in which his premature information had placed the count.

" To you, Oswald," he said, " the soother of all my cares, I would be indebted for the happiness I am half taught to expect;

but wrapped in the pleasure of your own reflections, you are unmindful that my suspense is aggravated, not relieved, by your incoherent intelligence; therefore I will thank you to send those who, from being less interested, may also be more rational."

Stung by a reproof so coolly delivered, he threw himself on his knees, entreating his lord's pardon, adding—"I had penned every sensation of joy and surprise in my own breast, during the recital, that no one might know how deeply concerned I was in what I heard, but had no sooner reached your presence, than I felt myself bereft of the self-command I had resolved to maintain till I had repeated all I knew."

"I can make every allowance for your feelings," replied his lord, "and am, you see, far more prepared to hear the extent of your good news, than you to relate it."

"Heaven be praised!" said Oswald; "then I will tell your lordship: but I must give it my own way."

The count nodded assent, and he proceeded—“ I followed my host, by his invitation, into a room, which also looked to that part of the street the funeral must pass ; and when we were waiting for its arrival, expressed my surprise at the numbers assembled on the occasion, remarking, it was doubtless some great personage, by all this expectation.

‘ Bless you !’ he replied, ‘ there are few great people in our neighbourhood would command such a concourse to witness their last journey, for there are few who have done so much good in this part as the dear lady whom they are now conveying to her tomb.’

‘ It is a lady, then?’ I repeated.

‘ Ay, and such a one,’ he continued, ‘ as we may look to see her fellow. To be sure, young madame possesses much such a heart, and every body loves her. But then madame Riviers was more than mortal ; she was so beautiful, that you might take her for an angel, and the poor always

believed her such, for never lady was such a friend to those in distress as herself. She sought the children of misery, visited their wretched hovels, and spread blessings around her wherever she went. There were people ill-natured enough to say she had been guilty of some great fault, and wished to hide it by all this kindness to the poor, because she was always sorrowful; but it was only those who were neither so handsome or so good, and therefore were jealous that the poor should follow her with blessings, which themselves did not deserve.'

'But who is this madame Riviers?' I asked.

'Why, that,' he replied, 'is the only question respecting her that I cannot answer; for where she came from, or who or what her family is, nobody in this part can tell; she came a stranger amongst us, and for some years that she has resided here, we have had reason to bless her name, which can never be forgot.'

'But did you not speak of a daughter,'

I inquired, interrupting him, ‘ when you mentioned young madame?’

‘ No,’ he said, ‘ she is not a daughter, nor was the young gentleman her son; but she loved them as well as mother could do, and they are inconsolable for her loss. Monsieur De Loutherbourg passed through here some days back, in his road from Fribourg, where madame died; for she had been on a visit, for a change of air, to a lady, who is abbess of a convent, and little thought, poor soul, of dying there, for it was very sudden, I believe, at last. But, as I was saying, monsieur De Loutherbourg and his lady were on their way home, to be ready to receive the corpse; but madame De Loutherbourg was taken so ill from fretting, that he was obliged to stop with her at my house near an hour, and never did I see such real sorrow as they are both in; and reason enough they have for it, especially monsieur, for though they are both orphans, left in her care, mademoiselle, whom he has lately married, had, I believe, all the money; but he will

now come in, it is supposed, for what madame Riviers possessed, and that must be something considerable, to do the good she did, beside living very genteel, though she kept no company, for the greatest part of her time was spent in educating the young folks, notwithstanding monsieur De Loutherbourg had a tutor, whom she had provided for him.'

' And where,' I said, ' did they reside?'

' About two miles from this,' he answered; ' at a very beautiful villa madame Riviers had purchased when she first came, and where, I hope, monsieur and madame De Loutherbourg will continue to live, as they must always be beloved among us for her sake; and, for the matter of that, they are very charming young people.'

" I had no more to ask for my own satisfaction, nor my host, I believe, more to tell the procession, therefore, had no sooner passed, than I hastened to rehearse all to my lord, and felt happy Frederick

was not by, lest his extreme joy should have betrayed him ; but I have proved myself as little to be trusted with happy information, for, indeed, I feel really ill since I heard it—but then it is from joy."

" In that case," said the count, suppressing his own feelings, " I must e'en go along to monsieur De Loutherbourg's, to terminate the suspense I am now enduring."

" Oh no !" he exclaimed, eagerly, " I must accompany you, to witness a meeting. I knew and felt, for some time, would take place. Do, my lord, let us instantly set out."

" Patience, my good fellow," returned the count; " your joy has certainly rendered you indifferent to every body's feelings but your own ; even the desire of embracing a long-lost child, should it prove my Henry, cannot justify my intruding on ~~his~~ present grief.—Poor Victoria!" he added, " at least thou hast endeavoured to repair, in the person of his son, the injury done to his father : for this I bless thee. Thou

art gone, and I forgive thee—I would even speak peace to thy ashes, and bid the cold sod lie light on thy bosom : may thy latter years have expiated the errors of thy earlier ones, and thy benevolence to the children of want be thy passport to eternal rest !—You must now, Oswald, seek our host, and say, I have determined on remaining the night here ; but carefully guard the knowledge thou hast acquired, lest a fatal disappointment should yet mar my embryo hopes, for even now I dare not be sanguine."

Oswald was more than so, and it required all his exertion to restrain his eager desire of acquainting Frederick with the discovery : but this was a task others had performed for him ; for, in his way from the count's, he met Clairville, with almost breathless impatience, demanding an interview.

Conscious how much pleasure he had himself derived from the previous recital, without asking the purport of his pressing

business; he conducted him to his lord, whom he no sooner beheld, than he exclaimed—“ Your lordship will, I hope, pardon my intrusion; but how shall I tell you, I have discovered the late residence of poor madame Riviers?—it is her they are now going to bury: but my dear young lord is alive, in good health, and beloved by every one. But I have a favour to ask of my lord the count, that will bind me his slave for ever;” and without waiting for his reply, added—“ It was I who tore him from his home, from the countess, and yourself; there is but one way in which I can procure his forgiveness for the deed, and without which even your lordship’s kindness will not reconcile me to life.”

“ And what,” inquired the count, burst by the agitation in which he saw him, and surprised at his eager manner, “ what do you wish to ask of me?”

“ Only,” he replied, “ to be commissioned with the blessed intelligence that he has still a father, and that father the count

De Vennuid! Oh, it will seal my pardon, blot out a remembrance of the injury I did him, and he will forget to curse Clairville."

"In the herald of such information, nothing must be done hastily," said the count, who had little leisure for the excess of his own joy in restraining the emotions of his servants: but their zeal delighted him, and he promised, if Frederick would retire and compose himself for the night, without revealing to the people of the hotel what he knew, to consider of his request by the next day; till then, he should take no steps, even to relieve his own suspense, which already became torturing.

The poor fellow promised to treasure the happy secret he possessed, and wait his lord's decision patiently; and Oswald, when his first emotion had subsided, became more tranquil.

But never had a night been so protracted—never did hours move more heavily on, than those which succeeded, to the

whole party ; and each, at an early one, left a restless pillow.

Various were the plans formed and rejected by the count during the night ; and at last he resolved Frederick should wait on monsieur De Loutherbourg in the course of the day, if he found himself sufficiently master of his own feelings not to injure those to whom he was commissioned by an abrupt disclosure of what he had to impart ; and he was dispatched with an inquiry, first, if that gentleman would admit his lord, who had business of importance with him ?—if so, that he would appoint his own hour for the proposed visit ; and, lastly, endeavour to learn if the count De Vennuel was at all known to him ; but he was forbid, on pain of his displeasure, to exceed this command, till he had further permission for doing so—a restriction that ill suited the ardent desire of Clairville to impart all he knew : but there was no alternative, and happy to have obtained thus much of his wishes, he set out

for the seat of monsieur De Loutherbourg, anticipating the interview he should, if possible, endeavour to gain, by delivering his message in person; but he was told by a domestic, on entreating this permission, that the extreme sorrow which both monsieur and madame were then in, for the recent loss of a near friend, precluded the possibility of their seeing strangers; but he would deliver any message he might have for them.

"Say, then," he replied, "I come in my master's name, who has business of the utmost consequence with monsieur De Loutherbourg, to solicit for him an early conference; and beg him," added the incautious Clairville, "as he values his future peace, not to refuse seeing him, for it is the count De Vennuel."

"His title, my good friend," said the servant, struck by the eager manner of Frederick, "will have little weight, for it bespeaks him a stranger to our family; and, as such, I do not think he has much chance of seeing my master, for at least a

few days; however, I will take your message to him, if you will wait a few minutes in the hall."

Clairville's impatience shook every limb; and when the man returned with an order for his immediate admission, his trembling knees could scarcely support him to the library, whither he was conducted: but when, on entering it, he beheld in the dejected countenance of monsieur De Loutherbourg an exact counterpart of his beloved lord, he stood a moment incapable of explaining the purport of his errand: Had he been permitted to throw himself at his feet, and, in the fullness of his joy, to have imparted the pleasing discovery, he had not been thus inanimate; but to conceal what passed in his breast was a task requiring his utmost exertion; and, lost in his own reflections, he remained gazing in silence on him, till monsieur De Loutherbourg recalled his recollection by saying—"Did I, my friend, rightly understand my servant, that your master was the count De Vennuel?"

"He is, monsieur, the same," returned Frederick; "and my lord entreats an immediate interview with you. I also implore you to see him, for indeed he has much to disclose."

"But first satisfy me," said De Loutherbourg, astonished at the singularity of his conduct, and more than half doubting him to be a maniac, "how long has the count been in this neighbourhood?"

"Only last night," replied Frederick: "we came from Guienne with the utmost dispatch, and were proceeding to Lucern, but fortunately detained by——" he was proceeding to say, "the funeral of madame Riviers," but his lord's displeasure flashed on his mind, and checked the articulation of the words.

They had, however, excited the curiosity of his auditor, and he inquired—"By what?"

Clairville cautiously answered—"By the funeral procession."

"Did the count then know who it was?" he asked, impatiently.

"Truly, monsieur, he did, for madame Riviers was well known to him." Aware he had said too much, he added, confusedly—"that is, my lord learnt great part of her history from the people of the hotel in which we reside."

Without regarding the latter part of his answer, monsieur De Loutherbourg eagerly exclaimed—"All confirms it!—Hasten, my good fellow, to your lord—tell him I wait his pleasure, and am equally impatient for the interview, since I also have much to communicate to him."

Frederick waited for no further message, and, before the count believed he had more than reached the villa of De Loutherbourg, he was a second time in his presence, and had disclosed the success of his embassy.

The power which had sustained his painful existence through years of hopeless sorrow, now armed him with fortitude be-

yond what he had dared to expect, and he prepared for the promised éclaircissement with a resolution that astonished himself, and left Oswald still more so.

" You must resign, Frederick," he said, " the important explanation to me, for I am parsimonious of the rapture attending the discovery I have to make: but I will be your advocate, and the first request of a fond father, should he find in this monsieur De Loutherbourg his long-lost child, shall be pardon for thee."

Frederick was satisfied, and, with a beating heart, followed his lord to what he persisted in believing the abode of that lost, but now recovered son. And that he was right, every feeling nature has ordained the father should experience convinced the count, on his entering the room into which he was conducted; for when De Loutherbourg (in the sable habiliment of sorrow, with a countenance that proved his soul also mourned) arose to receive him, every faculty became absorbed in the conviction that it was not

for a stranger these contending emotions passed within him—a being who had no claim on him, that his heart yearned to fold in his tenderest embrace; and, unable longer to command himself, the laws of propriety were no longer attended to—reason yielded to more powerful sentiments, and, regardless alike of all, he caught the offered hand of De Loutherbourg, clasped it with agony to his bosom, saying—" My God, I thank thee! Years of misery are terminated, for it is only Henry De Venniel, the child of my lost Adelaide, that could have awakened this deadened frame to such feelings, this harassed soul to such ecstasy!" and again he looked at him; but it was to see him sink upon the floor, overpowered by the sensations that at once assailed him.

De Loutherbourg had suspicions that the count De Venniel, for whom he had letters entrusted to him in the dying hours of madame Riviers, with strict injunctions that he rested not till he had discovered where he yet existed, was more

to him than she averred, and that he was deeply interested in tracing his abode; but scarce had that beloved friend been consigned to sorrow's last refuge, the peaceful grave, when, unsought, he beheld the count, and beheld (extatic thought!) in him a father! Nature owned his claim, and expanded with feelings unknown before; he rushed to meet the fond embrace, but the effect ended in a momentary suspension of the faculties, which had been strained too far; and the count, seeing him about to fall, clasped him still closer to his bursting heart.

The responses of each beat in unison, and nature enjoyed the triumph, whilst she kept reason in subjection, lest discrediting the proofs offered to substantiate such a discovery, it should prove an innovation on the pleasure she derived from the interview, or believing it, resign her regal throne to the tumultuous tide of passion so unexpected an event must admit, to overpower her more placid government: that tumult subsided, she cautiously re-

turned the reins; and a restoration to reason brought with it a conviction that nothing is impossible to the power of Omnipotence; and neither the count or monsieur De Loutherbourg longer doubted, that each had in the other found a tie, from which they had for years been severed; and, while in joy surpassing that incident to common events, the former pronounced the name of "Son!" the latter faltered the equally-endearing one of "Father!" each inquired could it be possible they were so blessed, and each acknowledged every circumstance tended to confirm the powerful emotion that had first proved the consanguinity.

The count gazed with rapture on the graceful manner of his son; for even the eventful moment could not make him insensible to the perfections he contemplated, and he silently blessed Victoria for her work; for that she had contributed largely to make him what he was, his knowledge of her great abilities, and, to himself, fatal accomplishments, left him no room

to doubt: but Henry marked, with eager curiosity, the ravage of sorrow in the grief-worn countenance of his already-beloved and new-found parent; but his attention was arrested by the promised request that he would personally assure Frederick his pardon was sealed for the treachery practised in his infant state, and which, happily as it terminated, might have ended, if not in his murder, at least in his final destruction; and the count related every particular of his late confession.

"For myself," said De Loutherbourg, or rather, now Henry De Vennuel, "I sincerely forgive him, but must not suffer the pale features of my revered father to remind me of what he has undergone from the villainy of this man."

"That is past," he replied, "and all I endured more than repaid by the present moment: but I have yet, my Henry, much to learn; you have papers that will, perhaps, explain all that may be essential to our further satisfaction?"

"I have reason," he said, "to think

they will; but I have still a more interesting confirmation that madame Riviers and the count De Vennuel were early friends: perhaps you will allow madame De Loutherbourg, once Josephine Riviers, to supply the friendship of her beloved madame Victoria, as also that of daughter to you; for such, sanctioned by madame Riviers, and, unknowing I had a parent, I have presumed to make her: but why I was kept in ignorance of such a blessing I have still to discover; yet it must not be till my lovely Josephine has pleaded her claims, and become a hearer of the wonderful tale."

Impatient to behold once more the daughter of his departed friend, and the sister of his lost Ethelwald, he entreated to be conducted to her, an interview we leave him to seek, while we return once more to Ethelwald's departure from Solothurn.

CHAPTER III.

It was followed by that of monsieur and madame De Loutherbourg for the convent in which madame Riviers was then a resident, whom they found much worse than they had expected ; and they would instantly have removed her to the villa, but it was then too late, for her appearance bespoke approaching dissolution, while every symptom confirmed her own assertion that the space between herself and eternity was short indeed.

“ Judge then, Josephine, child of my tenderest care, and you, my Henry, source of all my anxiety,” she said, “ how much I wish this parting embrace, while yet I possess the power of bestowing a last blessing ! But of this stranger—is he still with you ? Does he know the count De Venne ? ”

It was not possible to evade the question, and with regret she named his departure previous to the arrival of her letter; then she exclaimed—"One fond expectation more is blighted! I had hoped he would have saved you a weary search: yet it might not be as I suspected; however, there was much to confirm my opinion. As it is, you must promise, Henry, when this heart has resigned its last tumultuous throb, and my aching eyes are closed for ever, that you will seek this fugitive, to whom I can give you no clue; for twenty years have left me a stranger to his residence; yet that he lives I feel persuaded, and, in his solitude, cherishes an usurper of rights to which you have some claims. But I have papers that will further prove your pretensions, and these must be delivered with your own hands; for your appearance will tend to strengthen the evidence they contain. But ask not from me an explanation," seeing him about to interrupt her, "for an impenetrable mystery envelopes all that concerns

you, which is not reserved for me to elucidate, however inclined my anxious heart to shield yours from the tortures of suspense. I have endured it through a tedious pilgrimage; its venom has robbed me of innate peace, and preyed upon the vital spark, till my feeble frame yields the contest; it can no longer struggle against. Promise, therefore, you will obey my last injunctions, and deliver, into the hands of the count De Vennuel only, the paper I entrust to your care; and you, Josephine, that no consideration on your part shall restrain him from the pursuit."

Their mutual assurances were plighted in the most solemn manner for the due performance of the extorted promise; and, painful as was the task imposed on them by the silence to which they were *destined*, neither ventured to renew the subject, which she had purposely changed for a far different one.

As Henry was not allowed to remain in the convent, lodgings were provided for himself and madame De Loutherbourg

contiguous ; but the greater part of her time was spent at the bedside of her suffering friend, whose pillows never afforded rest if her hand had not placed them, nor was her medicine considered efficacious if not administered by herself.

Every succeeding day beheld her gradual approach to the awful fiat of existence ; and, sensible that a few days, nay perhaps hours, were all that remained to her, she delivered, with her last benediction, to the heart-stricken Henry, the packet, on which, she added, blessings yet unknown to him depended.

The watchful attention of Josephine was alternately relieved by the kind sisterhood, who eagerly pressed to offer their assistance ; and from their pious prayers madame Riviers derived all the satisfaction her expiring soul was capable of admitting. But years of sorrowing penitence had not obliterated her sense of guilt, while the deeply-injured Adelaide, and the man whose destruction she had wrought, were stings never to be erased.

from her tenacious memory ; for even the power of in part soothing the misery she had inflicted, by redressing the wrongs De Vennuel had sustained, was denied her. She knew monsieur Riviers had plotted the ruin of his child ; but the father was yet too dear to her for that child to be indifferent, and though it was Adelaide's also, she determined to rescue it from danger.

The world still contained one friend, who had drawn over all her failings the veil of mercy, and allowed every thing for the inexperienced and hapless state in which the misfortunes of her family had placed Victoria De Luziana. To this friend, therefore, who had been an early one of her mother, and had married, some years back, a Swiss gentleman, he was sent. They were childless ; and, to induce them to love it still more, she dared aver it was her own, and that she could amply provide for it.

A knowledge of her seducer left them no reason to doubt : but, though they

were entrusted with the important secret, it was carefully concealed from the world ; and Henry, as the orphan son of monsieur De Wilde's sister, enjoyed all the affection his supposed relationship warranted their bestowing.

But Victoria had limited this concealment to the life of monsieur Riviers only ; for, should she survive him, it was her intention to restore instantly the long-secluded child to the bereaved parent ; and, while she anticipated his joy on the recovery of such a blessing, flattered herself the motive that urged her to the step, and her care of him, would plead that pardon she so fervently implored Heaven she might live to obtain ; but her prayers were unavailing, and the death she had looked for, as affording a release from the oppressive secret, bound it in an impenetrable darkness.

Monsieur Riviers was pronounced in a dying state : she knew the extent of his hatred to the man they had both injured, and wondered not that his last breath

should be spent in devising means for his still more certain destruction ; but, while he did this, his dark conscience had sustained but one stab, through which he was vulnerable. The innocent blood shed by his orders demanded vengeance, and, in so doing, more than avenged his father's wrongs. A thousand times he cursed the villain Francisco, though made a villain by his vile arts, for having destroyed the boy—a thousand times implored Victoria to tell him, if a murderer had aught to hope; till, incapable of witnessing the tortures of his mind, she confessed his soul was not stained with the foul deed of which he accused himself.

“ How ! ” he exclaimed with trembling doubt, “ did he not die by Francisco’s hand ? I paid him his price, and it was to purchase blood : who, then, could convince me I am innocent ? No—he does not live, for then Riviers might escape perdition ; but he has prepared scorpions’ fangs for his condemned soul, and I am damned : yet will I glut my revenge on

his detested father, and he shall die, for having hurried that soul to the torments to which it is consigned!—Why strive to deceive me? True, Victoria, I have *deceived* thee: but if wealth can recompense thy wrongs, I have left thee plenty. I know I have injured thee; and yet, with an angel's mercy, thou wouldest bid me hope."

"What," she added, "shall I say to convince you I but assert the truth? Shall I swear to thee, that anxious to save you from such a crime, I preserved the infant; paid the wretch Fransisco a second reward for him, and have supported him ever since?"

"Where then," he abruptly inquired, "hast thou concealed him?"

"In Switzerland," she replied.

"Ah, then," he articulated with phrenzy, "thou wilt still deceive me? This lacerated body committed to the cold earth, you will own to my bitterest enemy his child lives; and hell were preferable to such a belief! Swear thou wilt never do

so, or I will drag thee with me to the gates of death, if even there thy soul should forsake me to soar aloft, when I am hurled to the frightful abyss reserved for guilt like mine?" and he drew her with violence towards him; but, firm to the purpose she meditated, she returned—"Never shall such a vow pass my lips!—already is Victoria lost too far in sin to need additional guilt—and that were such: neither do I value life. For what should I live?—to be defamed and branded with infamy—the victim of Riviers's seduction—the base destroyer of De Venniel's happiness—without a name but that I have for ever disgraced, and which I must change to obtain even common respect from those who will otherwise point a finger of scorn to all my actions, and hunt me from the society I have violated?"

"Then hear me," he said. "Victoria has yet power to reclaim her lost honour: let her not curse my memory, and I will give her one that shall place her in a

sphere beyond that from which I tore her; for I will make her mine in the sight of Heaven, commit my Josephine to her care, and, by so doing, convince the world she was the lawful wife of Riviers."

Transported by the promise, which would secure the society of her beloved Josephine, and give her that rank in life she had once merited, but long since despaired of ever obtaining, she blessed her seducer in the fervour of gratitude, and averred, her existence must be infinitely too short to express what she owed him for this reparation of her wounded honour.

Taking her hand, he said—"Mark me, Victoria! there is yet a sacrifice my dying lips demand of thee : I will do all thou shalt require of me to insure thy future happiness, and only one instance remains by which thou canst insure mine. I ask but thy secrecy as to this boy : bring it up thyself—heap riches on him—marry him even to my Josephine, to secure him wealth : but swear to me thy lips never shall reveal who he is, and I die satisfied—

deny me this request, and my late promise as to thyself is void."

For a moment she hesitated, but every consideration yielded to the dreaded one of the world's reproach. Heaves that breast in which self-love lays not the foundation of every action?—have we a motive unbiassed by this predominant rule? and if, in every trivial occurrence through life, we can trace its power, cease to wonder that Victoria decided in favour of Riviers, who survived but two days the promised act of retribution—the only one he ever made for an injury he had done.

One of the nuns who had chiefly attended with madame De Loutherbourg having been suddenly taken ill, a boarder, who had lately joined the sisterhood, kindly proposed sitting up with her—an offer she gladly accepted, and returned her acknowledgments by sister Theresa, who had brought the message; and when the abbess, on her return from matins, called to inquire after her friend, madame Riviers

was sleeping; she therefore beckoned Josephine from her pillow, and introduced the lady who was to be her companion for the night.

The stranger bowed in silence; but when madame De Louthierbourg expressed her fear that she would find it too much fatigue, she answered in the mildest accents — “Do not give it a thought: I live only for the service of others, and have long since ceased to do so for myself.”

Without appearing to notice her answer, the abbess recurred to other topics of conversation during her short stay, and then taking leave of them, retired for the night, while Josephine and her new acquaintance placed themselves near the bedside of her relative, who, for near an hour, slept apparently composed, during which time the stranger's eyes were alternately fixed on the emaciated form of madame Riviers, or the pensive features of her lovely nurse, whose interest seemed equally excited by the no less prepossessing face and figure of her companion; and as her mind glanced

on a retrospect of her own happiness, which, save in the present instance of her beloved madame Riviers's indisposition, had never known an interruption, she wondered what had made sorrow so familiar to this interesting woman, on whom she could not look without sentiments nearly allied to esteem, if not affection. But that she was unhappy, her own words had strongly indicated, and those were strengthened by the pleasing melancholy which shaded her countenance, and gave her expressive eyes a power of fascinating those who beheld her. But they were each too much engaged by their own observations, to interrupt the stillness reigning in the apartment; and, except a few casual remarks on the weather, or a slight inquiry as to the term of madame Riviers's indisposition, they were mostly silent; but a far different scene took place on the latter's awaking.

To madame De Loutherbourg's affectionate interrogation of how she found herself, she answered, cautious of alarming

her—"Not, I trust, worse: but I have had, my love," she said, "such a dream, that, were not nature too much exhausted, it would, I believe, add much to my recovery; for, in addition to your tender care, my Josephine, of which, in my waking or sleeping hours, I cannot be unmindful, I have in the last been attended by an angel commissioned to speak peace, by offers of mercy to my fleeting soul: but more, Josephine—she promised forgiveness of past injuries done to herself, and the balm distilled through my sore mind, for I felt the consolation such an assurance imparted, and am even better, now that sleep is dispersed. But whom have you there?—your usual companion? How much I am indebted to Theresa for her friendly conduct!"

The scream that followed her last words struck horror on the astonished madame De Loutherbourg, who believing (notwithstanding her assertion of being better) that she was actually dying, hung over her with *clasped hands*, incapable of moving. She

was going to tell her that Theresa's place had been supplied by the voluntary offer of the lady present, when the inquiring eyes of madame Riviers were turned towards her; but had no sooner encountered those which were also directed to herself, than she gave the fearful scream, and drew the bedclothes over her, as if to seclude her from a view so painful.

The stranger, more composed, still kept her seat; but when madame De Loutherbourg requested she would summon some of the nuns, whose adjoining cells made it little trouble to do so, she retired for that purpose, and had scarcely left the room, when madame Riviers again raised her eyes in search of the object who had excited so much emotion, and looked wildly round her; then catching the hand of Josephine, which she pressed with energy in her own fevered ones, inquired where she was, and whom she had seen?

" You are in your own room, madame," she replied, with gentleness, " where you have slept during your residence in the

convent; and the lady whom you saw is a friendly nun, who has taken Theresa's place for the night."

"Surely then," she returned, "I was not, as I believed, awake; for the phantom of my dream was still present to my imagination, and at the moment forgetting she whom it personated was dead, I beheld, as I thought, in your companion, her beauteous form—But it could not be; and I see that my weakness has alarmed you much, my Josephine."

She would have persuaded her it had not, but the tremble in which she remained contradicted the assertion, as she still held her hand, and on looking towards the vacant chair, on which the stranger had sat, eagerly demanded where the lady of whom she spoke then was? At that moment she again entered the room, accompanied by two of the nuns; but had no sooner advanced towards the bed, than the agitation which the poor invalid had before experienced returned with increased violence; and Josephine, convinced it must arise

from the extreme likeness she bore to some one on whom her disturbed mind rested, named her surmise, and entreated she would retire for a few minutes to a more distant part of the room, till her aunt had recovered the emotion which her presence evidently caused. She did so, but shook her head mournfully, as if thinking how deeply she must have injured that person whose resemblance so tortured her, while madame Riviers continued—"It is the shade of Adelaide!—my strained eyes cannot deceive me, though Josephine would. I thought she had brought me peace, but 'tis otherwise, and I feel agonies I cannot endure. Why did it not speak to me? I could have borne reproach better than her silence. Cruel Josephine! why didst thou send her away, till I had vented my full heart? Perhaps she would have believed the dying Victoria, for once she loved her—but then it was before she discovered her deceit; and now, what will my proofs of her Henry's innocence avail? They cannot recall her from the dead; and I

must not even tell her restless shade what I have done to make atonement."

Want of strength obliged her to cease speaking; but she lay with her eyes still fixed, as if in expectation of again beholding the supposed phantom, while the astonished nuns confirmed the opinion of madame De Loutherbourg that she was certainly delirious: but the stranger thought far otherwise, though she in part concealed her opinion; and having motioned that she would speak with Josephine, she crossed the room, while, in a low voice, she said—"I am fully convinced there is something on the mind of madame Riviers, that evidently disturbs her last hours, for such they appear to be; and it is doubtless connected with some one whom I must powerfully resemble; you have, therefore, an opportunity of affording that peace she can only derive from a disclosure of her private sorrows: if you approve of the experiment, endeavour to ascertain whom she believes me, and then strive to persuade her the person whom she supposes

dead is not so, but that I am really her. In promoting this step, I am influenced by no other motive than the wish of soothing a fellow-creature in such an awful moment. It may be that you will have reason to thank me for the advice, which you are to adopt or reject as most pleasant to yourself. I have no right to expect your confidence, therefore shall not be offended by your declining it; for, as I before said, I am a stranger to you, and my motive for the proposed plan, that of serving you in the present scene of distress."

Persuasion dwelt on her lovely lips; and though madame De Loutherbourg knew not the extent of that secret which she also believed preyed on the peace of madame Riviers, she felt more than half determined to try the experiment, if happily it might alleviate the distress in which she saw her; but on returning to her bedside, she found her eyes were closed, and her recent agitation succeeded by a stupor that she hoped would end in sleep. It was a favourable opportunity for dismissing the

nuns, whom she now regretted having made witnesses of what had passed ; and after thanking them for their kind attention when called on, begged they would return to their beds, as she hoped her friend, having recovered herself from, perhaps, the effect of an unpleasant dream, which her weak state made very probable, would now rest for the remainder of the night. Whatever their own sentiments, they returned to their separate cells, after assuring her they should hold themselves in readiness to attend her summons, should she have any further occasion for their service ; and again she was left with her first companion, whose words, now that she was herself more composed, occurred forcibly to her mind ; and it struck her she had laid a strong emphasis on her being *now* unknown to her, which certainly implied she was not always so. Still she in vain endeavoured to recollect where she had seen a likeness of the person then before her ; but as memory gave her no assistance, she determined again to lead to the subject : the

silence which followed the departure of the nuns presented a favourable moment for so doing, and she said—"I am certainly, madam, disposed to prove my confidence in you by adopting your proposal, should a renewal of my aunt's agitation render it expedient, for her distress of mind is truly alarming; yet I am at a loss to conjecture whom you can possibly so much resemble as to cause the irritation of her spirits, for I have always lived with her, and have no recollection of any friend she has lost, whom she can possibly take you for, unless it is the countess De Venneiel, whose name was Adelaide: but she has been dead many years, and madame Riviers's affection for her left no room for these violent bursts of agony, that appear rather the result of some private difference or misunderstanding between herself and the friend thus called on."

She looked at the stranger while she spoke, and fancied an ashy paleness overspread her countenance. She certainly trembled, and seeing her, as she believed,

about to faint, she would have flown for assistance; but catching her hand, she exclaimed—" If you value my happiness, let no one but yourself witness this little emotion ! I shall soon recover it—indeed I am even now better ;" and a smile, which she assumed to satisfy the astonished madame De Loutherbourg, rendered her lovely features still more interesting.

" The family," she said, " of whom you speak, was well known to me ; but I have lost sight of them for some years, nor did I know the countess was dead."

" I have always been given to understand so," replied Josephine, " by my aunt, who tenderly loved her ; and when myself a child, that amiable woman regarded me with the fondest affection, for the sake of my unfortunate parents, who were also dear to her. But I was too young," she added, " to understand much of the story of that unhappiness which separated the families, for we were once nearly connected : but madame Riviers has never *been herself* since she lost them ; for

though the education of monsieur De Loutherbourg and myself occupied much of her attention, she was often dejected, and seldom well: but neither my beloved Henry or myself could attribute it to any other cause, for a better heart never existed—the poor venerate her name, and the fondest mother never more strenuously performed her duty as such, than she did to the orphans Heaven committed to her care; judge then how anxiously I would promote her peace, whatever the result."

"And that will be very different from your expectation," replied the stranger: "but I must first convince you I am not altogether unworthy the confidence you would place in me, by telling you who I am; yet, in so doing, I must entrust to your keeping a secret, dear as that can be of madame Riviers. But first tell me, what proofs have you of the countess De Vennuel's death, for I have doubts of it?"

At that moment, as if even the vibration of the name had operated on the *powers of sleep*, madame De Riviers faintly

articulated — “What, my love, of the countess De Vennuel? Did I not hear you repeat her name?—a name once so dear to this sinking heart. Surely, Josephine,” and she raised herself on the pillow, “I have been strangely disturbed in my sleep to-night!—my head, even now, is not collected, for I fancied I heard you talking with some one, and that you more than once repeated the name of De Vennuel—But it could not be so.”

“Why not, my dear madam?” she asked; “they were known to me in my infant days, and I certainly was talking of them to a lady who was also acquainted with the count and countess, and who has some reason to believe the latter is not, as you have always supposed, dead.”

“If I could be persuaded to believe so,” she replied, “how different would be my last hours! But it is not possible she can live, and no one know it—my misery, therefore, has no alleviation; yet, Josephine, my conscience cannot accuse me of another crime: but it was such to in-

jure excellence like hers. Where is this friend you spoke of, who denies her death?—Oh, if she could convey to her the dying assurance Victoria would give, it might speak blessings to the countess, in whatever retirement she has sought, if really still living;” and she drew aside the curtain to look for her, which Josephine again replaced, saying—“Till assured you can behold her without the agitation into which her presence has twice thrown you, I cannot consent to gratify you with the interview.”

“What does my Josephine mean?” she inquired—“not to aver I actually saw a human being, whom I believed the shade of my once more than friend?—I remember the supposition made me ill, but then it was the effect of my spirits having been harassed by the fancy of a dream.”

“Nevertheless, my dear madame,” she answered, “the lady I mentioned so much resembles the countess, if you were dreaming of her, that it was seeing the likeness made you so ill.”

"Oh, then," she exclaimed, "let me again behold her! for what I saw was indeed so like her, that I cannot be deceived, and I promise to be composed—nay, I will not speak."

The stranger then came forward, but the promised resolution failed; she did not, as before, express such terror, but she placed her hand on her eyes, and, in a hollow voice, said—"Either thou art really Adelaide De Vennuel, or a shade only of her sainted self!—Let me entreat thee to speak, while I have yet power to hear thee!"

Agitated by her own emotions, the stranger, in faltering accents, faintly articulated—"What, poor sufferer, can I say to compose thee?"

"Say," she returned, in the same tremulous tone, "what thou art."

"Let the pressure of this hand, then, convince thee I am, like thyself, mortal;" and she placed hers on the cold one of madame Riviers, as it still concealed her eyes: "*if thou canst bear more, swear thou wilt*

never reveal what I impart to thee, and I will yet speak peace to thy wretched soul, whose cause of grief is well known to me."

" And well it may," she said, " when my senses no longer mock me: but, oh! if I am right, let me entreat thee not to extort a second promise, for I have already made one that presses hard on this trying hour—one that, did I dare explain it, would divest death of its horrors, and give a rich blessing to the count De Vennuel. But surely thou canst confide in the state to which I am reduced—the silent grave will soon consign all my knowledge to oblivion, and thy secret will be safe."

" I also, my dear madam," said Josephine, addressing the stranger, " will bind myself in any way you name, to keep sacred whatever you may have to impart to madame Riviers."

" Hear me then," she replied, in a firm but low voice, " assert that I am Adelaide, countess De Vennuel: but I came not, Victoria, to reproach thee, for past years of solitude have blunted the sting thou didst

inflict, and I have forgiven thee long since: may Heaven pardon thee, as I do!—I ask of thee no explanation, for it cannot now avail, and I can better forgive thy errors than him who seduced thee."

"But dost thou know the villain who did so?" she eagerly demanded, interrupting her.

"A man who was once not a villain," said the countess, with some little asperity; "and that I knew him, a painful separation of twenty years from the husband I till then idolized can fatally prove."

"Ah! I knew thou wast deceived," returned madame Riviers: "but, before I am called to the awful tribunal of an offended God, let me solemnly swear, that though Riviers urged me to seduce the count's affections under the mask of virtue, I had only a harlot's embrace to lure him to. Riviers was the villain who wronged me of my spotless fame, and terror of public infamy made me for ever his dupe—he it was who plunged me in destruction: yes, Josephine, though I have

hitherto concealed from thee his black crimes, that, as a child, thou shouldest not curse his memory, I dare no longer conceal their extent. The count has nothing to answer for; but, oh, how much have I!"

"Dare I," said the countess, with stifled emotion, "dare I, Victoria, trust to my own senses?—canst thou, in such an hour, when eternity is before thee, assert the innocence of Henry De Vennuel?"

"I do," she returned, "and call every ministering angel to bear the record of my oath, that he is so of my seduction, to be inserted in the book where every action of my life will be rated, and by which I must be judged!"

"Then let me bless thee," she said; "for I dare believe it, and Henry is justified: the world has already acquitted him of murder, thee of seduction, and he is again the Henry De Vennuel I once knew him, and still worthy of my fondest affection. My remaining days, therefore, cheered by this fond assurance, shall be cheerfully devoted to gratitude and devotion."

"Let me entreat thee," exclaimed madame Riviers, "not to form such a resolution: years of felicity yet await you in the world to which you must return; you will find in it ties of which you are not aware—blessings I dare not explain. The orphan child of Sigismund Riviers was once dear to you; that child still lives in madame De Loutherbourg, who has also a husband, that *must* interest you: he has letters from me, which he must personally deliver to the count, nor rest till he has done so; therefore, take no step till he has obtained the interview, on which so much depends. Accuse me not of duplicity at such a moment, in being thus mysterious, for he who through life ruled my every action, and turned them to his own purpose, on his deathbed imposed a secret my lips must never impart; but my letter will explain more. May it prove—it must do so—a reward for the mercy thou hast already extended to me! But I can say no more—nature's last exertion is nearly over; yet I shall now die comparatively happy,

and regret not that I am going: Nay, do not weep, Josephine!"—for madame De Loutherbourg had undergone so many sensations in the last hour, that had her oppressed spirits been unreleased by tears, the consequences must have been fatal—“even you will also rejoice in my release, when the contents of the packet Henry possesses shall be known; and that it must be, when he has found the count.”

The countess tenderly embraced her, with an assurance that she had never lost the affectionate interest she held as the lovely child of parents so dear to her, and that her friendship must ever follow her through life. Josephine received the embrace with pleasure, while madame Rivers, with a smile of satisfaction, heard the promise; and having taken some refreshment, endeavoured to obtain the rest of which she stood so much in need.

In the mean time the countess explained to the inquiring madame De Loutherbourg many events which she became anxious to learn, and was more deeply in-

terested in than she imagined, while in return she spoke of her own life, and dwelt with rapture on the merits of her Henry, unconscious that she had awakened sentiments in the mind of the countess, which she wished to reject, from an idea they tended to excite hopes she had too little prospect of seeing realized, to make her sanguine. She then entreated, that if she acquainted this beloved husband with the incidents of this momentous night, she would bind him to secrecy as to her existence, till such time as the mysterious packet had been perused by the count, whose residence, on these conditions, she would reveal, since, though the count believed her dead, she was perfectly acquainted with all that had recently befallen him.
“ I have also urgent reasons,” she added, “ for my name being unknown in the convent; it is so many years since I resigned my title, that I cannot have it repeated while things remain in their present situation; you will, therefore, distinguish me by that of madame Morin, as it is the one

I ~~assumed~~ on my entering it, and will suffice till I know my future destiny.

The return of evening saw madame Rivi^rs still in a kind of dose; but madame De Loutherbourg's grief became excessive, when the physician who attended her called, and gave it as his opinion she would never revive again sufficiently to be sensible, and he doubted if she held it many hours—a prediction that proved true, for before monsieur De Loutherbourg paid her his usual morning visit, the last breath had told the soul's transit; and for the abbess was reserved the mournful task of acquainting him with her removal from this sublunary state.

CHAPTER IV.

THE lovely form of Josephine revived in the count's breast every sentiment of af-

fection long cherished for her deceased father and lamented brother, and what, as an artless infant, she had herself inspired, when first he received her from the treacherous uncle, who had laid waste his fair fields of domestic felicity.

It was so long since he had suffered himself to derive pleasure from contemplating woman, that her beauteous figure excited more than admiration—it was surprise, at beholding such a masterpiece of nature's workmanship; and when to that was added a conviction that she was his daughter, the wife of his beloved Henry, his transport was extatic. She had received his fatherly embrace, and, while he sat with one arm fondly encircling her, and the other resting on the shoulder of his son, he tenderly exclaimed—“ What a reward is this for all I have endured! Such is my full tide of happiness, that I was almost tempted to believe I had but one wish ungratified, and wanted but one being to complete the endearing circle for which I must still strive to live; but in

thee, my Josephine, I awake to a painful remembrance of my lost Adelaide. Her last hours were cruelly embittered by ingratitude, and denied the consolation of knowing her child would one day be restored to his care-worn father."

Willing to divert his mind from the painful retrospect, and not yet at liberty to undeceive him as to the existence of his countess, Henry inquired who the second object was for whose presence he was thus solicitous? adding—"But from my dear madame Riviers I was taught to expect a rival, for she named a usurper of my rights, though she refused either to tell me the extent of my own claims on you, or the name of this fortunate possessor of what I now find, my father's affection."

"Yes," said the count, "I cherished him when I believed myself childless; but I loved him before I knew that his claims were such as must make him a powerful rival to thee, such as cannot fail to secure him the affections of Josephine—in short,

are such on each of us, that, without his restoration, our felicity must be incomplete; for he is, my Henry, the injured child of Sigismund Riviers, and the brother of thy Josephine. The villain by whom Clairville was employed to tear thee from me has deprived me of him also, and I have sworn never to resign my search till I have found him; nor can even the recovery of my children delay my pursuit longer than I shall have told the eventful history they have yet to learn, and passed a few days in the enjoyment of that happiness to which their society has restored me."

He then related to the surprised and delighted Josephine his conviction of her brother's existence, and presented her with a miniature of her father, which he had always carried about him since the receipt of Jaqueline's packet; but the rapture this intelligence would have otherwise excited was damped by a recollection of his then unknown fate; and the tears which had their origin in the source of

joy for the prize she had discovered, now became those of sorrow for the loss she had sustained in such a brother as the count had delineated her unknown Sigismund.

Henry participated in her regret; but he became impatient for the result of his father's perusing the papers, which, he trusted, were to substantiate, beyond all doubt, his affinity to him; and having fetched them from his cabinet, entreated he would take the earliest opportunity of examining their contents, that nothing might be wanting to establish and justify his right to the endearing appellation of Henry De Vennuiel.

The count, equally desirous of perusing what Victoria had been so anxious to convey to him, proposed an immediate inspection of them, and for that purpose retired to another apartment. He looked at the well-remembered writing, and recollects, with painful sensations, the period when Victoria's power over him led him to contrast her elegant hand with

every other he knew, merely to confirm his predetermined opinion of its superiority; that power was, in one fatal moment, dissolved, but not till it had laid the foundation of that destruction which overwhelmed him: yet she had eventually secured the wreck of his happiness, in the preservation of the child now restored to him, and he fondly hoped, that in the letter he then held she had fully imparted all that related to a confirmation of his dearest expectation: with trembling suspense he removed the seal:—

“Start not, De Vennuel,” she wrote, “for it is no longer the guilty, but the penitent Victoria, who now addresses thee—her letter no longer fraught with sentiments to fan the unhallowed flame which once consumed thee, but to impart truths important to thy future peace. I know thou wilt reject this assertion, and ask what reliance the victim of my too-successful deception can have on aught I

would ever? But the present, De Venneuil, is no longer an heir of deceit—I am hastening to the presence of Him who, from the evidence of the recording angel, will pronounce my doom: nor will it avail me to plead that a villain, formed such by nature, made me what I was; for thy exalted character, and the purity of thy injured Adelaide, should have been a shield to my erring heart, and taught me a reverence of that virtue I had sacrificed before I knew its value.

“Guarded by innocence, I might have viewed such perfections with the admiration they demanded, and revered the beings who possessed them; but I had not such a defence. Reason had taught me to despise the man who lured me from the paths of peace: yet I was become essential to his dark purposes, and if I had left him, public infamy was my certain fate. He allowed me, therefore, the semblance of virtue—but for what purpose? to plunge me still deeper in guilt, and bring me even nearer to his own base level.

“ I was commanded to gain De Ven-
nuiel’s love, and weakly flattered by a sup-
position that my powers of attraction
must be great, if successful, I entered with
avidity on my dangerous task ; but long
ere it was accomplished, that heart, which
was forbid to love him, renounced all claims
but his—he became the victim, I the will-
ing slave, for affection, ardent as my na-
ture, engrossed every thought, and bore
down every barrier to my obtaining a re-
turn. While Riviers applauded my zeal
in his cause, and triumphed in my success,
it was myself only I sought to serve.

“ But it was not to dwell on the painful
retrospect I took my pen—not to disturb
that tranquillity which, I trust, you have
in part regained, that I thus force on you
a remembrance of the despised, and,
doubtless, long since forgotten Victoria,
but, if possible, to make some reparation
for past injuries.

“ Peace, conscience ! I know what thou
wouldst urge—that an oath I dare not dis-
regard seals the confession thou wouldest

make.—Yes, De Venuis, twenty years have not lessened my enemy's power over me; for even from the grave he reminds me of the extorted vow, and warns me of its violation.

“ I know I cannot lay this tortured heart open for your inspection—dare not reveal what I did to rescue the soul of Riviers from the crime of murder; but I may tell thee what I have suffered from that moment—tell thee, that not even the society of my beloved Josephine, and a being still more dear to me than herself, could impart happiness—not even the name which Riviers in his dying hours gave me could whisper peace, or recompense me for the moment in which I pronounced the rash promise he demanded for the empty title.

“ The miniature I enclose you has been my dearest treasure; I have washed it with tears of penitence, and treasured it as my last resource of conveying to thee much more than I can say. It will be de-

livered when I am no more, by a youth whom I have reared; educated, and adored. Happily his appearance may interest thee; if so, let not the love I bore him steel thee against his merits, for they are many—against his claims, for they also are powerful: examine his features—compare them with the picture he brings, and which I took of thee in the full meridian of my hapless love, and if thou shalt see the strong resemblance they bear each other, believe that all things are possible. All my hopes of eternal peace, all my consolation in the hour of death, is founded on the result of this interview, and I cannot be deceived—kindred souls will not, cannot remain strangers to each other. De Vennuel will look on my Henry, and, in the fullness of his joy, pronounce pardon and forgiveness on the ashes of Victoria. Even now my spirits are exhilarated by the conviction I have lightened the dreadful pressure of the consuming secret; and even thou, Riviers, cannot say I am perfidiously.

“ Though hitherto unable to trace his residence, I still believe the count De Vennuel lives; and Henry De Loutherbourg will have my injunction never to give up the search after thee, or resign the name I have given him, till thou shalt restore that to which he has more just pretensions.

“ In his wife I restore the infant favourite of thy happier days, Josephine Riviers, and thou wilt now love her from more powerful motives. Would that to the union of three souls I could add the countess De Vepnuel! But if, as said, blessed spirits are allowed to hover near those they loved on earth, she will yet witness the endearing circle. But shouldst thou still doubt I impose on thee, if the form, the features, and voice of Henry, speak not to thy heart—if the strange child, who has shared thy solitude, perhaps engaged thy affection, should render thee unmindful of other claims, there may yet exist a being on whom no restraint is laid, who may now gladly own

the infant he sacrificed to interest, and
threw on thy mercy.

" That man can tell you more of Henry : bribe him well, for gold is his idol, and he will unfold such a tale as thou shalt shrink from hearing ; for he also was the tool of Riviers, and Riviers can no longer pay him for deeds of past villainy, or lure him to fresh ones.

" Seek then this Francisco De Roseville —if still unsatisfied, say, all that madame Riviers dared impart she did do, and leaves the rest to him, her colleague, to finish. His residence was once on the banks of the Bay of Biscay, and it may be he yet lives, for he was a hardened ruffian, and seemed, by his Herculean form and savage manners, to defy the common casualties incident to his fellow-creatures, who, although allied to him by nature's laws, were certainly another race of beings : but there is no other evidence to which I can direct you—nor is it needful, for long ere thou hast reached this part of my letter, *thou wilt have revoked the curse* once

heaped on Victoria De Luziana ; nor shall she trespass longer on thy returning happiness, by adding more of herself. Adieu, therefore, De Vennuel, once the idol of my unhallowed love, but now the revered friend, for whose peace I am interested—whose injuries I would redress—whose felicities promote ! I am, therefore, impatient for the approaching hour of my dissolution, since it is only in death thou canst receive reparation from

“ VICTORIA RIVIERS.”

“ Yes, Victoria !” said the count, laying down the letter, “ thou art justified in the conviction that nature would plead for my Henry : nor could I for a moment deny the passport his intelligent features carry with them ; I am fully satisfied it is he for whom my heart first felt a father’s transport—him, on whose infant form I have so often gazed with rapture, as he lay smiling in the arms of his now-sainted mother !—Spirit of my Adelaide ! let me

invoke thy beloved presence!—look down from the effulgence of celestial light, where thou art now a ministering angel, and behold the child of thy affection restored to my disconsolate heart—intercede for the penitent Victoria, that her sorrowing shade may be permitted to pass the gates of eternal felicity—that her kindness to our innocent boy may expiate her past errors, and when the accusing spirit shall point out in the scroll of fate her fall from virtue, may the angel of mercy arrest the memorial, to record in its place this deed of humanity, for which I also bless her!"

But every moment passed not in the presence of his son was now a blank in the new existence he felt, and he hastened to impart these fresh proofs of their claims on each other to the expecting Henry, to whom he communicated the contents of his letter.

The recent conviction he had received of Riviers's base conduct stung him to the soul, and, in despite of reason, mingled

curses with the breath in which he implored blessings on the instrument of his fell purposes. He saw fully the extent of his unbounded malice in the vow he had extorted from Victoria, that she would never reveal the existence of his child : yet how he had himself obtained the knowledge which she promised Francisco never to impart to him, was still a mystery. But he reserved his own opinion for the private ear of his son, from delicacy to the feelings of Josephine, to whom he had been an affectionate uncle, and as such entitled to her esteem ; nor did he wish to lessen it by enlarging upon the irreparable injury done to himself through the consummate villainy of that uncle.

The barrier was now removed to the further explanation madame De Vennuel (for such we must now style her) had to give, and she tenderly inquired what proofs he possessed of the countess's death ?

“ Alas, my Josephine ! ” he replied, mournfully, “ such as I cannot reject,

Oswald, my faithful servant, the companion of all my sorrows, the patient endurer of that petulance affliction had stamped my temper with, traced her to the convent in which she had sought a refuge from the pursuit of her ungrateful husband ; but it was only to hear her noble mind, incapable of sustaining such accumulated evils, had refused the consolation offered by the holy sisters with whom she resided, and resigned her to that despair which survived not what she was given to believe the murder of monsieur Riviers.

“ I no longer sought a justification, when she whom alone I wished to convince of my innocence could never know it ; and for years, unmindful of the world’s opinion, I bore the stigma, was pronounced a murderer, and fled the haunts of men, whose happiness was torture to me. Ethelwald, the boy so mysteriously forced on me, I considered a scourge, and, while I pitied his innocence, hated his sight : but he too bore my unkind treatment with pa-

tient resignation, commiserating me in return, and would have, had he dared, poured the balm of consolation on my wounded mind.

“ I taught him to despise the world I had abjured, brought him up in a contempt of mankind, and prepared him to suspect the fairest character—to shun friendship as a shoal destined to wreck his brightest prospects—to fly the approach of love as certain destruction—in short, I would have made him a counterpart of that misanthrope treachery had made me; but his lesson was only learned by theory, and wanted the fatal practice mine had had, to stamp the trait, which was superficial, not, like mine, indelible.

“ Thus tutored, I consigned him to the world in a military capacity, which was his own choice, and in which he bade fair for obtaining a soldier’s highest ambition, the laurelled wreath. But his career of glory was stopped by a fatal, and, at that time, an invisible power.

“ In Austria, chance threw him in the

way of the fell destroyer of all my hopes, the wretch Francisco, I am now convinced it could be no other. In a convened assembly of officers, met to try a deserter, the real son of this villain, he asserted his pretensions to Ethelwald, who, on the following night, together with this supposed father and brother, disappeared from Breslaw. But no sooner had this dark mysterious deed reached me, than I felt how dear he was to my adamantine heart, for sorrow again assailed it; my solitude became hateful, and from that moment I resolved on quitting Beauvoir."

"What do I hear?" said Henry: "was Beauvoir the late residence of my father? Suffer me to ask how long it is since you left it?"

Surprised by his eagerness, the count named the period of his removal, as also the motive which urged him to demand a public trial, by which he was fully acquitted of the crime he stood charged with, in the death of monsieur Riviers.

"Then, my Josephine," he replied, "we

have seen this lost brother!—it must be my preserver!—that loved, mysterious stranger from whom we so reluctantly parted, and who left us to pursue a journey on which, he averred, so much depended; and Beauvoir was, I well remember, the place of his destination."

"What, then," returned the count, "must be his disappointment, when, having reached it, he shall seek in vain for me! But monsieur St. Aubin," for he knew not that he also had left it, "will direct his course."

At that moment it occurred, that the events which had so rapidly succeeded his trial had hitherto left him unmindful what he owed to the friendly attention of St. Aubin, and that he had actually left Guienne without acquainting this deserving friend with the incidents which had taken place.

"But tell me, my Henry," he continued, "in what way he has been instrumental to thy preservation? for you spoke of him as 'your preserver.'

"And with justice, my father," he replied, "for to Sigismund Riviers, the brother of my Josephine, I am now persuaded I owe my present felicity, and the existence I enjoy."

He then related to the count a transaction already so well known to the reader, and dwelt with energy on the affectionate interest both himself and madame De Vennuel felt for this unknown relative, whose departure they had never ceased to regret, and for the completion of whose promise as to his future destiny they as anxiously waited.

The count listened attentively to the recital, and having obtained a full description of his person, no longer hesitated pronouncing—"It must have been Sigismund: we will therefore," he said, "instantly renew the search after him; for here, even with you, my children, I cannot rest satisfied till he is recovered. Let us instantly set out for Guienne; from thence I will dispatch Oswald, whose love for him is unbounded, to Beauvoir; he

will doubtless find him with monsieur St. Aubin, and we shall yet embrace him, in the two-fold character of my Ethelwald; and Josephine's Sigismund."

"Add to it," said Henry, "my deliverer."

"True," returned his father; "by this one act how infinitely has he rewarded me for all that ever I have done for him!—How inscrutable," he continued, "are the ways of Providence, that the very infant which I considered my curse should have proved so invaluable a blessing! But delay no longer the necessary orders for our departure, as I am impatient to clasp him to that heart which has so often cruelly rejected his infantine caresses, and spurned him as an usurper of my Henry's rights—impatient to express my debt of gratitude for your life, and to reward him, by imparting the knowledge of such a sister as he possesses."

"But there is yet, my dear sir," said madame De Vennuel, placing her hand carelessly on his, "one person still want-

ing to complete our little circle, even when we have recovered my Sigismund; and I am so bent on having my party complete, that I cannot determine to leave Switzerland without this charming friend."

" You can make no addition, my child," replied the count, " unpleasant to me, since every friend you love must have a claim on my regard : but do not protract our stay, for I am eager to shew my faithful domestics the treasure I have recovered, and to secure that which is yet only half regained. But who is this favourite, whom you have hitherto kept in the background of our present felicity?"

" Ah ! " she returned, still pressing his hand, " that was only because I could not bring her forward till you had perused the contents of madame Rivier's letter."

" Surely Josephine," he said, " that is strange, for she spoke of no friend to whom you can possibly allude?"

" That is true, for at the time she wrote, she knew not that friend existed—knew not that she would sooth her last hours,

and speak consolation to her departing spirit, which even the fondest attention of her Josephine was incapable of imparting."

"Peace, my throbbing heart!" exclaimed the count, placing his hand to his forehead, on which a cold dew had rested—"let not my senses deceive me, lest I raise a phantom that can have no reality. Be careful, Josephine, how you again unhinge that reason which has so often tottered on its throne—so often been the sport of sorrow, the dupe of hope, the torture of my existence. Even now half-formed stirrings whirl through my heated brain; and though I would not accuse you of buffeting with my wounded feelings, I dare not believe what your ambiguous words lead me to conjecture. No—it is you, my child, who are deceived!—Adelaide, the wife of my bosom, rests in the silent tomb—she has long since passed the confines of mortality; and soars above with congenial spirits; hers was much too good for that destined her in this earthly state, and the

guilty ingrate can only hope for mercy from her intercession. But who, Josephine, is she that has imposed on thy credulity, and the dying hours of madame Riviers, with that pardon it rested not with her to give? I would detect the deception."

"That then you shall do," she said, "for even I would not be deceived in such a point—nor am I, for the evidence I can bring shall not be doubted. I will yet restore a mother to my Henry, or for ever resign the endearing tie of wife—for ever renounce his name, and your paternal affection; but when convinced you are prepared to see her, I will lead you to that Adelaide, whose departed worth only you have treasured, while the world yet contained the inestimable blessing whose loss you have so long bewailed. What says our dear madame Riviers? 'Believe that all things are possible.' Is this more wonderful than the recovery of your long-lost Henry?—more improbable than the discovery of my Sigismund, who is indeed a

being raised from the grave, and whose existence, since the fatal shipwreck that consigned my hapless family to the waves, was never thought of, never suspected?"

"Enough!" said the count, in agony; "I would believe you; yet, but a short time since, Josephine, I had drained the cup of affliction even to the dregs, and still my wayward destiny seemed incomplete, for new sorrows crowded on me. What a reverse! That cup now cannot contain my happiness—it overflows. For what, just Heaven! am I reserved? Let me but see this injured wife—once more gaze on her beauteous features, and hear her pronounce my pardon!—then take me hence, take me to thyself, lest but one grain of my felicity should again drop from my full measure, and I dare to murmur at the dispensation!—Now, my love," he added, "complete thy task of mercy; tell me where I am to find this injured angel—tell me that she will again look on him she once loved, and I will bless thee with my latest breath! I am now composed, now

capable of hearing all thou wouldest impart
and I hear."

She then related the recent event, with her own conviction that the countess, satisfied by the solemn assurance madame Riviers had given her of his innocence, and knowing also that the world had fully acquitted him in the late trial, was impatient to embrace the beloved husband she still found worthy of her fondest regard.

"Enough, Josephine! nature can bear no more!" said the count; "but, as thou art kind, lead me to her presence, while I have power to convince myself of the reality, lest I suspect reason has become the sport of joy, as it has too often been that of sorrow. Moments are ages till my impassioned eyes are again feasted on the form so long wrested from them; let us then, in pity to my impatience, this instant set out!"

Alarmed by his agitation, she entreated he would compose himself till the morning, and that she would then attend him

at any hour he named, alleging that much caution was requisite in their proceedings, and that it would be expedient for her to see the countess first, to prepare her for an explanation of the singular coincidence of events that had brought him to their abode, as a too abrupt disclosure of them might be productive of unpleasant consequences.

Henry seconded her entreaties, and the count found himself, though reluctantly, obliged to forego the impulse which strongly urged his immediate departure; and he retired at an early hour, with a hope of lessening the tedious interval of returning day, by resigning memory to its temporary oblivion, sleep.

But the relief thus sought is not always attainable; and often the happy being in whose breast the heart sits light, while the frame, but half wearied by pleasure, or perchance business, revels in the full possession of its potent powers, while the child of misery, and the exhausted care-worn

traveller, pass on a restless pillow their
nightly vigils.

It was thus with the count : his full-fraught heart refused the weak attempts of nature to sooth him to forgetfulness ; and, while more than half the world slept, his eager anticipation of the morning's dawn outstripped its slow approach. He arose with its first appearance, but found his son had made every requisite preparation for the intended journey ; and if ever Oswald felt his lord's want of confidence, it was in this instance : that the arrangements he beheld for their instant departure to Fribourg argued some fresh discovery, his visible agitation and impatience to be gone sufficiently convinced him ; yet he was silent as to the purport of his journey, but from motives far different to those Oswald had assigned.

After deeply ruminating on all that Josephine had told him, and weighing the probability in his own mind, the count still doubted ; for on Oswald's veracity he had relied for the confirmation he brought

him of Adelaide's death. Oswald had never deceived him, and nothing but his own conviction of her existence could implicate his tried and faithful servant. He was going prepared for the disappointment he still believed awaited him, yet fully determined to confute the sacrilegious impostor who had presumed to personate such excellence; and, to save Oswald's feelings, pent in his own breast the secret, till agony became a term inadequate to his suppressed sensations.

On their arrival at Fribourg, Josephine, as predetermined, visited the convent alone, and having accounted for her unexpected return by stating that she had business of consequence with madame Morin, was conducted to her own cell. The countess received her with open arms, and having affectionately named monsieur De Loutherbourg, inquired what could possibly have brought her thus early to Fribourg? "for the time, my dear Josephine," she added, "is strangely protracted on my mournful calendar; it is but a

few days since you left me, with a promise, indeed, of your return, but much remained to be decided before that event took place."

"True, my dear madam," she returned, agitated by what she had to impart, "but my impatience to solicit, for my beloved Henry, a mother's blessing, has hastened that return."—Taking the hand of the astonished countess, and dropping on one knee, she continued—"And here let me entreat, that when I have restored to his revered parent that son who impatiently waits for the interview, she will extend a benediction to her who is already blest in having claims that she proudly asserts on her affections."

The countess De Vennuel had once surmounted a task, which she believed must render every succeeding one for which she might be reserved comparatively trivial; but the superior degree of fortitude she possessed, while it blunted the poignancy of every attack sorrow made, did not arm her with the same defence against the tide

of joy which now assailed her. She listened attentively to the relation, and the dying words of madame Riviers in a moment occurred to her mind—that Josephine had a husband who must interest her—that he was commissioned with letters to the count, and urged her to take no step till these letters were perused; little doubt, therefore, remained in her intelligent mind, but that in this husband she was to behold her long-lamented Henry; but incapable of sustaining the emotion such a belief gave rise to, she tenderly raised Josephine, clasped her, in silent anguish, to her bosom, and wept over her, without the power of asking a further explanation.

At length, with her usual smile of sweetness, she said—“ Help me, my Josephine, to adore the Disposer of all events, who has, in this great instance of his unbounded mercy, chased my cloud of sorrow; then take a mother’s fondest blessing for the balm thou hast poured on her wounded spirits, and lead me to this reco-

vered treasure, that must reunite me to his long, too-long deserted father; for I am prepared, by my own feelings, and the assertion of madame Riviers, to behold, in your husband, the child of whom I was so inhumanly bereaved—by what means restored to me, I stay not now to ask, for that too I must soon learn, since I shall now return to the world, in which I have still duties to perform: I renounced it only till the blessings torn from me were regained. We will now, Josephine, together seek my abused, my injured Henry, whose pale and altered form, when last I saw him, plainly indicated how much he needed our tenderest care."

Delighted at having thus far succeeded so well in the execution of her commission, Josephine said—"But are you satisfied the interview will not agitate you too much to-day? Shall it be postponed till to-morrow, and I will remain with you till then?"

"Have I, my love," she returned, "given so poor a proof of my fortitude, that you

fear to put my weakness to the test?—Trust me, Josephine, a mother's raptures can ill brook restraint—a wife's much less—I must instantly be conducted to your Henry, to my Henry, for I have much to ask, much to communicate, and the delay of every moment brings with it a re-proof."

"But first suffer me to ask," returned madame De Venniel, taking her hand, "could I rightly understand my revered parent, that she had seen the count in his present pale and altered state?"

"Even so," she replied: "I saw him, strange as it may appear, some weeks since, but he was sleeping; I even ventured to press my lips to his, yet he saw not that Adelaide was the watchful guardian of his midnight hour—knew not that her rebellious heart, revoking the vow I had made never to return to him till satisfied of his innocence, would have flown to his, and owned its sufferings from so long a separation."

"But now, my dear madam," said Josephine, interrupting her, "now that his innocence is fully proved—now that my Henry exists to lead his fond anticipating father to the wife of his bosom, are you ready to see him?—shall I promise a welcome reception to each?"

"Dear, mysterious girl!" she replied, "what would you have me infer? Henry cannot already have received a father's blessing, for when I left Gascony, the count was in Guienne; yet you speak of them as if together."

"And thus it is," she said. "I have left them anxiously counting the lapse of time till my return: but ask me no farther explanation; suffice it that Heaven, favouring the auspicious reunion, and weary of the persecutions you have each endured, directed his steps to Switzerland: let me therefore entreat that you will now accompany me, and, by your exemplary fortitude, help to support the count, my father, through the scene which awaits him; for his noble mind, shattered as it

has been, will, I much fear, be long in regaining its wonted powers."

The countess needed no solicitation, and having explained to the abbess (who, on the death of madame Riviers, had been made acquainted with her name and quality) the extent of those blessings to which she was returning, immediately quitted the convent. The count and Henry, to divert the tedious interval, had strolled out, and were still absent when the countess and Josephine arrived, who instantly placed herself near the window, to watch, as she said, their approach; but the slow unequal steps of the count, as he, in a few minutes after, passed it, followed by the faithful well-known Oswald, and supported by the attentive Henry, who appeared in earnest conversation with him, was productive of sensations too powerful for all the fortitude she had believed herself possessed of.

No informing friend was requisite to point out the loved deserted husband, whom ardent expectation now sought;

and it was sufficiently evident the youth by whom he was attended could be no other than her son. She was then going to clasp to her long-widowed bosom its dearest lord, and with him this recovered pledge of their mutual love; but the transport of anticipation procrastinated the reality, for when they entered the room, Josephine was supporting her inanimate and almost lifeless form, which the count with agony folded in his trembling arms, while he vainly implored her, by every tender appellation, to speak to him.

It was an effort she as vainly attempted: when her slow returning senses enabled her to behold the group by whom she was surrounded, her head rested on the shoulders of this justly-idolized husband, whose hand also pressed hers, while his once-expressive eyes, now dimmed by affliction, were fondly watching life's returning functions; on the other side of her, the affectionate Josephine; and, kneeling before her, with tender solicitude, the exact resemblance of the count, in the elegant and

graceful figure of her son. A mother may describe her feelings at that moment, but it is only a mother who can define them. She raised him with ecstasy to her throbbing heart, and those tears, whose sources had so often been exhausted for his loss, now flowed from excess of joy at his return, and gave her, after some minutes, a power of utterance.

"Thus far, my Henry—child of my affection," she said, "thy mother is blest indeed; for thou wilt be a powerful mediator between me and thy noble father, from whom treachery and unparalleled ingratitude have too long separated me."

"He shall, my Adelaide," impatiently exclaimed the count, "more closely cement the affections of our future years, and guard it from a second cruel separation; but thine own exalted purity needs no advocate but the love I bear thee, and which no shaft of destiny could extirpate, or time diminish! Satisfy me that thy heart still beats with its wonted senti-

ments, and Heaven cannot augment the blessings it has already given me."

"Let this then," she said, meeting his offered embrace, and pressing him to her pure bosom, "convince you that Adelaide is indeed unchanged. I have now fulfilled my promise; for the world has restored the Henry De Venniel I once knew, since he is no longer the base seducer of innocence I was taught to believe, and no longer stained by even the imputation of murder, for had even his enemy fallen treacherously by his hand, we had never met; but we have now, and we are entered on a new existence; let us not, therefore, mar it by a painful retrospect of the past, but, living in these our children, endeavour to forget the years of separation from them; or if recurring to memory, may the sufferings then endured awaken our hearts to a just acknowledgment of that unbounded mercy, which leaves open, in our eventful history, a wide field of hope for the children of sorrow!"

The count could only listen, for his feelings suppressed utterance; but her gentle soothings, the fond solicitude of his son, who looked on his mother with admiration, and the affectionate entreaties of Josephine, in part recovered him from the delirium of joy, that threatened, at one time, to annihilate that reason which he averred had been too often tried, and which, he might have added, was unsupported by the pious resignation that had enabled his amiable countess to stem, with like composure, the tide of affliction which had swept away every blessing she possessed, and the joyful moment which had so unexpectedly restored them to her with interest.

When more collected, and capable of speaking, he said—"Henry, I will retire to my room, and you will send Oswald to me; he only can calm my tumultuous emotions—he has been used to regulate the tempest of my soul; and when in his faithful bosom I have poured forth my ex-

cess of happiness, I shall return more fitted to enjoy my rich blessings."

Oswald, already acquainted with the important incident, trembled for its effect on his beloved lord, and wisely suppressed his own immoderate joy to receive the confidence reposed in him by the count, whose incoherent effusions of rapture became agony, and in the end, as usual, terminated in a violent burst of tears, which his servant attempted not to interrupt, for he had never known them fail restoring him to a degree of composure, even when the result of some heavy calamity, or fresh cause of grief; and now he had every thing to hope from their efficacy, therefore promoted the propensity, till assured there was no longer aught to apprehend from the agitation into which he had been thrown by the restoration of his beloved lady. But no sooner had his returning powers of recollection enabled him to articulate, than he sternly demanded of Oswald the motive for that deception he had

practised with such success, for so many years, on his too-easy credulity?

"It was not enough," he added, "that I must become the dupe of villains—be scourged by the unexampled treachery of my dearest friend, but thou, dissembler, must join the league against me! Oswald, 'twas unkindly done!—thou hast seen these eyes wash my sleepless couch—witnessed my frenzied starts, my worse than madness (for I was sensible to all I suffered)—knew there was but *one* balm to close the wounds my undeserved injuries had inflicted, and that one, with savage avarice, thou didst withhold from me: whence, I say, the motive for thy mistaken kindness, if such thou meant it? for a motive thou must have had, in plotting the fabrication of Adelaide's death."

Oswald had indeed been the author of a falsehood, and knew it such when he averred it: but Oswald lived only for the family of his lord, was biassed by no motive that clashed against their interest or happiness; and in this instance he was

convinced the countess would justify his conduct to the satisfaction of his lord ; but he felt the full severity of those reproaches to which he was obliged to submit; and calmly answered—" I have, my lord, fulfilled my fixed determination, and the parting promise I made Mr. Ethelwald, never to leave your lordship while my assiduities could be of service. I have seen you in possession of that felicity I ever felt persuaded awaited you ; and now, in the happy circle by which my lord the count is surrounded, Oswald is only the despised, reviled, and accused hypocrite ; he will withdraw his hated presence, and, retiring to some remote corner of the world, spend his future days in prayer for the uninterrupted continuance of that happiness he rejoices even to have seen the dawn of."

Struck by his manner, and repenting his own harshness, the count said—" Not so, Oswald ; the companion of my misery must be the sharer of my happiness. Perhaps I was hasty in the demand, for doubt-

less your motive was good, and I would fain know it."

"It is to my lady then," he replied, "I must refer your lordship for the desired explanation, by which I must either stand condemned or acquitted as to the justness of my intentions."

"In that case," returned the count, "it will not, I pronounce, be the former: and I will instantly seek her, that I may no longer withhold the justice of which my harshness has incautiously deprived you."

He was then conducted to his expecting family, and found that Josephine, determined to be the herald of all that could impart pleasure to the countess, had, during his absence, related such parts of the mysterious history of Sigismund as came within the knowledge of herself and Henry.

"It remains then, my Adelaide, but for you to satisfy us," said the count, "of such particulars as relate to yourself, during the dreadful interval in which you have indeed been dead to me; for Oswald, refusing to assign the motive which actuated

him to impose on me the only falsehood I have ever detected him in, has referred me to you for an explanation."

"And that, my dear lord," she replied, "may be given in a few words. You will pardon my passing rapidly over the fatal cause that hurried me from Le Blanc, for in that instance I am sure your own heart will acquit me, situated as I then was, and knowing, as you did, Adelaide's was no common love. A being, who, for Josephine's sake, must be nameless, arranged the preparations for my departure, as my own powers of thinking were at that period annihilated : but happily the motives by which he was actuated were unwarily explained sooner than he intended ; yet, firm to my fixed purpose, I had recourse to the tried fidelity of Oswald, whose faithful service rates him far above even the term of domestic ; by his aid I gained in safety the convent to which I had resolved on retiring, and where I remained, under an assumed character, till having, as he told you, traced my residence, he was dis-

patched thither by your orders, to ascertain if it was really so; and then it was to close at once his painful entreaties for my return (for never servant so well pleaded a master's cause) that I extorted a promise from him he could not break. He attested your innocence in a point of honour for which you fled, in so persuasive a manner that I could not doubt the truth of his relation; but he was less eloquent, because less satisfied himself, in the more important cause that had degraded him whom till then I had ever believed the first, the most exalted of human beings; and to see him in any other light was torture. I had no longer my smiling boy, to even in part compensate me for such a husband as I had lost, and it was only from religion I now anticipated the shadow of that peace whose reality was sacrificed. Still it was not my intention to preclude the possibility of returning to the world I had abjured, if, at any future period, the conviction of your having been, as Oswald stated, the injured victim, should be strengthened with un-

questionable proofs of your innocence; yet, in the present instance, I dared not rely on Oswald's faith, and dreaded lest affection for his lord, and commiseration for the sufferings he described, should, in an unguarded moment, prompt him to reveal my place of residence. I therefore told him, time only could, by justifying the count's actions, reconcile me to the return he was then so solicitous for; and when satisfied the world had acquitted him, we should meet again, if he did not place an insuperable bar between us; for that unless he promised to adopt the plan I had suggested to him, by circulating the report of my death, and steadfastly asserting the same till he had my authority for contradicting it, I would, to elude his pursuit, instantly retire to another convent, and take the veil as soon as my novitiate should be expired, which would at once place me beyond his lord's power and his own vain entreaties, which could not divert me from my determined resolution. Oswald had no alternative, and relying on

his own persuasion that the time must arrive in which all would be explained to my satisfaction, and a firm dependence on my promise that I would return to the count on those terms, reluctantly agreed to add, as he said, a fresh sting to the already-broken heart of his beloved lord, who, he doubted, would never survive such accumulated evils.—Thinkest thou," she continued, looking affectionately at the count, "my mind was more composed in that trying hour? Believe me, not a pang you endured but had its counterpart in this disconsolate bosom, uncheered even by the solace of such a faithful counsellor as you possessed in Oswald, whom having thus gained to my purpose, I ventured to entrust still farther with my intentions. Having previously learned from him that you never could return to Le Blanc, till tried and honourably acquitted for the supposed murder, and that, rejecting the form of a public trial, knowing yourself innocent, you had, under a borrowed name, and in a private character, taken up your

abode at Beauvoir—that Le Blanc was now totally shut up, and divested of every domestic, except Cleon and Beatrice, who had strict orders that no strangers, led thither by curiosity, should ever be allowed to inspect its once-elegant apartments, it struck me, if I could win these worthy creatures also to my purpose, I would, after some time, privately retire to this scene of my former happiness, and live a perfect recluse, in the full luxury of grief, unrestrained by the prying observation to which, in a convent, I must be subject: and this scheme I imparted to Oswald, who eagerly closed with the plan, which he strenuously urged me to adopt, probably with a view of diverting me from the intention of taking the veil, though he alleged as a reason his conviction that Cleon and Beatrice would not only faithfully keep my secret, but contribute every thing in their power to alleviate the sorrow which he nevertheless trusted would be of short duration. Alas! he at that time little supposed succeeding years would

still see us the crushed victims of such an implacable enemy.

" He left me to visit Le Blanc, where his honest zeal arranged matters for my reception; and after remaining a few months in the convent, I returned privately to that once-loved, but then, indeed, deserted spot, where I gave free scope to the suppressed sorrows of my lacerated heart. So small were my wants in this living tomb, for it was literally such, as I never left the turret in which I first took up my residence, that your generosity to the faithful domestics would have divested me even of a fear that I was an encumbrance on them, had not the valuable trinkets I possessed satisfied me I could always amply recompense them for the small portion I took from them. But their fidelity equalled Oswald's; and the only happiness they were capable of enjoying, amidst the misfortunes of their lord's family, was derived from my residing with them: nor was my solitude interrupted during that period but by one instance.

" "I was seated at the turret window, towards the close of a fine evening, mournfully contemplating the setting sun, when I noticed three gentlemen passing, who were apparently taking a casual view of the surrounding scenery: but my eyes, at the same moment, rested on a very elegant young man, who, regardless of the other three, though evidently his companions, was earnestly examining the turret, as if his attention was arrested by something which had attracted his observation. Without giving myself time to recollect the almost improbability that, from the height and distance, he could possibly have discreed my figure, habited as I always was in black, and sitting some paces from the window, I arose hastily, and crossed the room to the sofa, on which I threw myself, in terror that I had been seen; and for a time the incident, trivial as it was, agitated my weak and debilitated frame so much, that it required all the exertions of my faithful servants, and the good girl, a niece of Beatrice, whom she had procured

to attend me, to reconcile me to the belief that they were strangers travelling through Gascony, and had probably noticed the building in passing, which they were given to understand was uninhabited by any person save themselves, as the gentlemen had actually been there for half an hour to rest one of the party, who was too much fatigued to proceed without doing so.

" Weeks and months again succeeded each other, till even the dormant hope of returning happiness became almost extinct; in short, I believed myself nearly reconciled to the eternal separation that appeared inevitable, when your strange and unexpected presence at Le Blanc threw its ancient inhabitants into a confusion that was near betraying the secret so long preserved by them with honest fidelity. My own surprise at the event was only equalled by my eager anticipation of the trial, on the result of which partly depended my reunion with you,

but, what was infinitely more, a life so valued. At all events, my stay at the villa was no longer proper, and the first suggestion was how to conceal myself during your residence in it ; the next, on the instant of your departure to become again a wanderer, till all was decided. The former fear Oswald kindly removed, by an assurance that you would remain at most but a day or two, during which it was highly improbable you would investigate any part of the house, but, least of all, the apartment I had made choice of, as being totally unconnected with any you had inhabited in happier times ; and the latter intention I did not entrust him with, lest, for your sake, he should oppose it. I had numbered years of misery in my turret ; and while others slept, my weary nights were passed in watching the full-orbed moon, as its partial beams revealed the surrounding landscape.

"But all was trivial to my sensations on finding myself once more beneath the same roof with you. My eager ears

caught the vibration of each passing sound, in expectation of that voice, so dear, so well known: but my room was too remote, and the day I spent infinitely surpassed the most wretched I had ever known. From the good Beatrice, I learnt your task was not less severe—an account Oswald also confirmed, with an assurance that, finding yourself unequal to remain at the villa, you purposed returning to Guienne on the following day; intelligence I had no sooner gained than I became anxious to execute a before but half-formed project, which I believed, if completed, would render me less unhappy.

“ This was, at the awful hour of midnight, to visit your chamber, and having satisfied myself that you were sleeping, to behold, but for one moment only, those features so long treasured in my now-hopeless mind. Conscious that you believed me dead, I ventured to trust, that should you by chance awake before I could quit the apartment, the hour, place, and your own disturbed mind, would rather

lead you to suppose mine a supernatural appearance than reality; and, to aid the deception, I clothed myself entirely in white. In this scheme, Oswald also was an agent; and on a signal given by him, I ventured to enter the room: but how I was supported through the self-imposed trial, I am not even now capable of telling you. With clasped hands I gazed on your altered countenance, and marked, with agony to which no words can do justice, the devastating hand of grief.

“ Exhausted by the fatigue your spirits had undergone, you slept sound; and with a temerity for which, on recollection, I have since trembled, I dared to impress what I then thought a last kiss on your pale lips; but conscious, at the moment, of the impropriety which might expose me to a discovery, I flew like lightning from the chamber, nor stopped till I had regained the turret.”

“ Heaven!” said the count, interrupting her, “ how well I remember the tortures of that night! for in the visions of

sleep, my Adelaide, I felt that hallowed kiss, and awoke to behold, indeed, the fleet, ing form, which Oswald persuaded me lived only in my wandering imagination."

The countess smiled as she proceeded — " My hazardous undertaking brought not the relief I had so fondly anticipated, for Henry De Venniel, the seducer of Victoria, the murderer of his enemy, dear as he was even in these characters, could never again be mine, since as such I had too probably for ever resigned him. But the pale emaciated form I had seen awak- ened more than commiseration, and every impulse of duty and affection accused me of forsaking him at such a moment : but to return to him was impossible ; twenty years had not justified one action for which I left him ; the injured Victoria might still live, and doubtless did, to brand his name with infamy ; the marble monument of Riviers yet blazoned to the eyes of day a tale I would have gladly erased from time's memorial, even with my own exist- ence ; and should the impending trial

emancipate him from the latter fatal charge, at what tribunal could he plead his innocence of the former ?

" I determined, therefore, his departure from the villa should be followed by my immediate removal ; and no sooner was that departure made known to me by Beatrice, than I acquainted her in return with my resolution, which I gave her at the same time to understand was not to be shaken ; but when, in a tremulous voice, and her aged eyes bathed in tears, she inquired where her honoured lady meant to go, and who was to have the happiness of attending me in future, since their services were no longer wanted, the question perplexed me ; for though I had seen the necessity of leaving Le Blanc, my perturbed spirits had as yet fixed on no plan for doing so, or even thought of my destination ; when Beatrice, taking advantage of my momentary hesitation, as if unwilling to trust my residence beyond her knowledge, entreated I would pardon her, saying, if Agnes might be permitted to attend me to Fri-

bourg, in Switzerland, where she had an own sister, the mother of this good girl, whom I have before mentioned, she could promise me the kindest attention, both from herself and husband, who would feel themselves honoured indeed by my taking up my abode with them, till such time as every thing was made comfortable for my reception in my own family, and which she was sure could not be far distant.

"I was much pleased with the proposition, and instantly closed with it, subjoining only two conditions--which were, that my residence should be concealed from Oswald, till a letter from me should leave them at liberty to make it known; and, secondly, that I should be introduced to the father and mother of Agnes as the widow of an officer, and that having business in Switzerland, I wished to remain a few months with them during its completion. But my design was, having reached their dwelling in safety, to fix on some convent, into which I could enter as a

boarder; and so impatient was I become to facilitate my scheme, that I suffered nothing to delay our journey: and a short time saw me the resident of a cottage, in the environs of Fribourg, that had every thing to recommend it, had my mind been sufficiently harmonized to have derived either comfort or consolation; but the recent scene I had encountered nearly dispersed that fortitude which had stood the test of twenty years hopeless sorrow; and I became more wretched, more irresolute, than ever; for, notwithstanding I still adhered to my first intention of retiring to a convent, and that from the window of my little chamber I could plainly discern a sacred edifice of that description, I still deferred naming my resolution, though I had made frequent inquiries as to their order of the mother of Agnes, who, I learnt, shortly after my arrival, was distantly related to the portress, and in the habit of paying her accustomed visits.

“Never can I describe the sensations, which had nearly defeated all my cau-

tion, when, on her return, one evening, she said to her husband—‘ It is supposed, Carlos, poor madame Riviers must die at last, for she is getting worse every day, and young madame has been sent for.’

‘ And who,’ I asked, ‘ is this lady, for whom you appear so interested?’

‘ It is,’ she replied, ‘ a friend, madame, of the lady-abbess, who has been with her some time for her health; but it is to no purpose, for hers, poor soul, is an unhappy mind, and that is seldom cured by any remedies.’

‘ It is her daughter then,’ I returned, ‘ who is sent for?’

‘ An adopted one only, I believe,’ she answered; ‘ for I don’t think she ever had any children, as I understand her husband was killed soon after they were married.’

“ Afraid of betraying my own surmises, I dared inquire no more; and, on retiring to my bed, revolved in my mind the information I had so unexpectedly gained of the lost Victoria—for that it was her, I did not hesitate to believe. On the following

day I told Agnes, that having a very great desire to enjoy the religious tranquillity of a conventional life for a few months, it was my intention to enter the one so immediately adjacent to her parents' habitation as a boarder, and that she could remain with them till I had finally determined on my return to Gascony, which entirely depended on many circumstances, and might even be much sooner than I had at first intended ; for, in my own mind, I felt a conviction, that the interview I was resolved on obtaining with Victoria must either restore you to me, or place for ever an inseparable barrier between us ; and in the latter case I should assuredly take the veil.

" Agnes looked pensively at me, as if by no means approving the proposed step; but the mention of my return appeared to remove her half-formed doubts, as to my sudden intention, for such she deemed it, of entering the convent ; and finding me determined, she said her mother could give me every requisite intelligence

of the sisterhood, for that, beside her relationship to the portress, she was known to the lady-abbes, who had, on many occasions, been very good to her.

" This was desirable information, as it might speed the design, for my impatience now brooked no delay: and having renewed the subject to my kind hostess, she immediately waited on the abbes, and so far settled every thing for my reception, that a very few hours saw me a resident in the same house with her who was finally to determine my future happiness or misery. All conspired to favour my intentions; for on the third day after my arrival, Thereta was suddenly taken ill, an incident the abbes expressed much regret at—‘ Not only,’ she said, ‘ on Theresa’s account,’ who was much beloved by them, ‘ but also for madame De Loutherbourg, who would be deprived of her company for the night, as she was to have sat up with her, in madame Riviers’s chamber.’

" I instantly offered to take her place, if permitted to do so, and my services

were happily accepted. The sequel is already too well known to need a repetition ; and I have now, I trust, fully satisfied you as to Oswald's integrity throughout the affair."

" As it has terminated," said the count, " I can easily pardon the deception he practised towards me ; and I must not, in my present happiness, allow myself to think how I should have acted, had that termination been different ; we will, therefore, dismiss the subject with my full forgiveness ; and, as I am impatient to return to Guienne, having no further excuse for a longer continuance in Switzerland, convinced as I am Sigismund has returned to Beauvoir, we will not delay our journey, as it is my intention, having reached the Castle, to dispatch Oswald in search of the beloved fugitive."

The first intelligence received on their arrival was a stab to the promised happiness they had begun so fully to enjoy.

CHAPTER V.

ETHELWALD (for as yet he was known in Guienne by no other name, as the count deferred an explanation of his birth till the success of his inquiries were known) was already an inhabitant of the Castle; but the voice that cautiously revealed the information faltered in the delivery, and the count eagerly demanded what yet remained to account for his visible agitation?—he was not to be deceived: but the dreadful assertion, that Ethelwald was believed to be dying, that the physician had that morning given up all hopes of his recovery, was a blow too severe.

Madame De Vennuel, in the arms of her distracted husband, was conveyed senseless to her own room; and it required all the mild reasoning and fondest attention of the amiable countess to reconcile

the count to such a decision ; nor was it till she had promised to visit the suffering youth herself, and bring back her opinion of him, that he could be prevailed on to remain where he was, till sufficiently collected for the interview, which, in his present state, must be highly injurious, if not fatal to the invalid.

" Let Oswald, then," he said, " accompany you ; for if there is yet a dawn of reason remaining, he will derive pleasure from a sight of him. Go then, my Adelaide, tell me but that he will live, and in the mean time I will seek the poor Josephine, to offer that consolation I need myself."

Followed by Oswald, the countess was conducted to the room in which he lay, but had scarcely reached it, when his frenzied exclamation caught her ear.—" Save him, Roderigo !" he said ; " see you not his sacred blood ?—now it flows !—'tis the count De Venniel, I tell you ! and Francisco shed it !—did he not tell me he would do so if I left him ?—yet you hurried me

to the rash step—hurried me to destruction ! But for De Loutherbourg, I might have reached Beauvoir in time to save him ; but his wife enslaved me, diverted me from my purpose ! But, Josephine," he continued, lowering his voice, " I have much to tell thee: but I must find the count first, or Francisco will supersede me.—Hark ! 'tis the ruffian's voice ! See, see ?" he added, in renewed agony, " they are tearing him away—leading him to justice, for the murder he did not commit ! Where is Oswald?—Perfidious wretch ! he promised never to forsake his master, yet he is nowhere to be found, and my feeble arms are confined. See you not the accursed bonds !" and, to her consternation, the countess saw his hands actually were confined, while Oswald inquired of Madaline how long he had been at the Castle, and what had reduced him to the situation in which they found him ?

" The latter," she said, without regarding the countess, whose features were concealed by the long veil she wore, and

which, in the confusion on their arrival, she had not taken off, “I can scarcely tell you : he has been here but a few days, yet I am not satisfied that his head was at all right when he came first, for he was so faint, so pale, and trembled so much, when I was sent for into the room to attend him, that I thought he would have died then : but when he came a little to himself, he inquired if I knew where the count was ? and I had no sooner answered his lordship was in Switzerland, to which place he was gone in search of a young gentleman, whom he had brought up, than clasping his hands, he exclaimed—‘ Then he will be destroyed, and I have helped to murder him ! Yes,’ and his eyes flashed fire, ‘ even now Francisco has seized him !—help, Oswald, help !—tell him I will go back—become a robber, villain, any thing he would have me, to save De Valmont !’

“ Thus, poor soul ! he went on, and I sent instantly for the physician who had attended my lord the count, and acquainted him with the circumstance, when it

occurred to his better judgment, that this was actually the youth of whom my lord was then in search ; and so it proved, for when we told him he was called Ethelwald, he took his hand and repeated the name, which he instantly understood, and said—‘ Who calls the wretched Ethelwald ?—’tis not the chevalier’s voice, nor Oswald’s !

‘ But it is a friend of the count’s,’ returned the doctor.

“ Oh, run then,’ he replied ; ‘ say you know he is innocent ; every witness is of consequence ! Go, for my brain is on fire !

“ The physician ordered him to bed, and has since constantly attended ; but he this morning declared, if it was not possible to send to the count, that either himself or Oswald might come to certify my lord’s safety, nothing could restore him. Oh, how I blessed the servant that acquainted me with your unexpected arrival ! He mentioned also the ladies—and I humbly beg your pardon, madame,” she continued, “ for having talked so much before you ;

but my heart is so full for this dear young gentleman, that I can think of nothing else."

This was not a time to explain who the countess was, for Oswald feared the effects of Madaline's excessive joy ; therefore, turning again to the bed, he laid his hand on the burning forehead of Sigismund, who, during Madaline's recital, had lain in a stupor, the result of his late exertions, which had totally exhausted him, and said —“ Mr. Ethelwald, will you not speak to Oswald ?”

“ Oh yea,” he replied, with eagerness : “ why have you staid so long? I have been searching everywhere for you, but they told me you were dead. I wanted you very much once, but I have forgot what it was. Oh, now I do remember—I wanted you to lead me to the chevalier, for the chateau is shut up, and at monsieur St. Aubin’s they turned me out, and said he did not wish me to know where he was. Is it so, Oswald ?”

“ No, my dear young master,” replied

Oswald; "and if you will but compose yourself, and try to sleep a little first, I will remain with you till you awake, and then bring him to you; for he is very well, and wishes much to see you."

"Ah, my good fellow," he returned, "I will do any thing you tell me: but if I go to sleep, I shall dream of the murdered count, for I know Franciso did murder him!"

"But that is not the case," said Oswald, "for the chevalier, or rather the count De Vennuiel, is now waiting to see you: but it must not be, till you have endeavoured to sleep; and I will watch by you during the time, otherwise I must leave you directly."

The threat agitated him, and he promised to try, if he would not go from him.—"But, tell me," he added, looking steadfastly at the countess, "who is that lady? it is not madame St. Aubin?"

"No—but I am a friend of yours," said the countess, with her accustomed sweetness, "and a friend of the chevalier's also,

and, what is more, I will be your nurse, if you will be composed, and do what your attendants require."

This he readily agreed to, provided she would have the bandages removed from his arms; and, notwithstanding Madaline's terror, she desired Oswald instantly to take them off.

He appeared to derive pleasure from the freedom he had obtained, but made no other use of it than to take a hand of the countess, and placing it under his head, as if to prevent her leaving him; then, as if pleased with the mode of security he had adopted, he smiled, and closed his eyes.

She next desired Madaline would retire with the other servants who were in the room; as she meant, with Oswald, to wait the event of an hour by his bedside, during which he should not be spoke to, or see any one; and they were to acquaint the count with her arrangement, as also her hopes that he was not so bad as had been represented.

Madaline saw nothing to justify such hopes, but she retired to execute her commission, and learn, if possible, who the strange ladies were; but nothing could satisfy her that she was not deceived by a fabrication, when Clairville related the consequence of each, with their affinity to the count. It was only from her lord she could be prevailed on to believe such wonderful truths, and her aged eyes swam with tears, while he confirmed what Frederick had attested.

In the mean time, Sigismund slept for some minutes, and though still wandering when he awoke, he exhibited no inclination to rave, or exert himself, as he must before have done, to be thus confined; he frequently entreated to know who the countess was, and at last inquired if she knew madame De Loutherbourg?

She answered—"Yes, perfectly well." "Then I will tell you," he said, "it is on her account I have been ill: but do not acquaint monsieur, for I would die rather

than injure him; but I loved his wife much too well, and that made me stay with her when I should have been with the count, for they tell me he is not, as I once knew him, the chevalier De Valmont. Am I not an ungrateful wretch?"

"By no means," said the countess, determined, if possible, to rouse the active-powers of his mind; "you were justified in loving madame De Loutherbourg, for she is a near relation; and the count was in safety, therefore did not require your immediate presence."

"What!" he replied, interrupting her, and pressing her hand with fervour: "tell me that again, but not so fast—my head is very bad, and I do not hear things right: is it so, Oswald? But then she is not a relation of Franciso; her angel form sprang not from such a brutal soil—nature never could have linked such perfection to a savage so unhumanized as he is; how then can that be?"

"Neither are you related to him," re-

turned the countess ; “ therefore strive to get well, and you shall be made acquainted with the whole.”

It was only his dread of Francisco’s power, the terror he was under for the count’s safety, and his concealed attachment to madame De Loutherbourg, which had reduced him to such a state; and when, even to his confused mind, these subjects were partially explained, he became gradually more composed; and, though still unable to clearly comprehend them, the physician, on his arrival, found his symptoms more favourable; and by the unwearied attention of Oswald, who never left him, and the occasional visits of the count and countess, who watched his recovery with painful solicitude, he was, in a few days, sufficiently well to hear and understand the revolution that had taken place in his destiny, and clasped, with fraternal affection, to his heart, that sister whose powerful claims as such had awakened sensations which, from mistaking, he

believed injurious to madame De Loutherbourg ; and a short period saw him restored, in perfect health, to the happy circle.

It was now the count enjoyed the full extent of his former felicity, and had no longer an enemy to dread in the guise of friendship ; for his children, his Adelaide, were the only sacred ties he owned, and they again united the severed chain, every link of which acquired additional strength from its long separation : his heart was in possession of all it fondly treasured—but Sigismund's wandered to its counterpart : the early lesson taught him of suspecting friendship as a doubtful blessing, avoiding love as a sure destruction, had little weight, for Albert was yet the beloved friend to whom he panted to unfold his strange reverse of fate, and without whose friendship he believed half his present joys would lose their value ; for Hoffman, too, he was interested, and looked forward for a reunion with each, as a point requisite for his future happiness.

But love had, in him, a still more powerful advocate ; he was formed to enjoy its sublimest rapture, and Katherine, the first and only magnet, was still the object in whom his fondest dream of bliss centered. St. Aubin could neither reject his family or fortune, since both were good—the latter affluent; for his father's property having descended, with that of Don Pedello, and his uncle, Americus Riviers, to Josephine, she thought herself amply repaid in resigning it for the possession of such a brother ; and, as the count had more than sufficient to support the ancient consequence of his house, he refused to let her accept the generous offer of Sigismund, to share equally the fortune she had, as she asserted, only held in trust for him : he would, therefore, hasten into Languedoc, and seek the fair friend for whose sake alone he prized the wealth fortune had so lavishly bestowed on him. But how much had he yet to explain, to reinstate him in the esteem (doubtless long since forfeited)

of her worthy family—how much remained to be done, before his justly-valued honour, freed from the odium by which it was then obscured, could resume its wonted lustre ! and he sought an early opportunity of explaining to the count the anxiety which began to place every blessing he possessed in the background of his promised felicity.

“ I am still, my dear sir,” he said, “ in the opinion of my sovereign, of generals Daun and Durand, in fact, every exalted character to whom I was once known, a degraded being, whom they must despise, leagued, as they suppose me, with vagrants, levelled to the rank of a common deserter—indeed I am considered such by them, opprobriums under which I can no longer exist ; say, then, if the determination I have formed meets your approbation, or aid me with your counsel to improve the plan I have suggested, as requisite to be instantly carried into execution ; which is, having drawn up a memorial of the unprecedented events that have taken

place, and fairly stated every transaction of my life, both as they relate to myself, and the various characters connected with them, to set out for Vienna, and at the feet of my royal master lay the papers which must either restore me to what I was, or doom me to perpetual banishment, since I feel that the happiness of Sigismund Riviers can be raised on no other foundation than the unblemished honour of Ethelwald De Valmont; that honour is now impeached, and must be restored so spotless, that even sordid minds shall not dare to question its purity, before I acknowledge that fate, even in the invaluable blessings it has accumulated for my enjoyment, has recompensed me for the idol it so cruelly forced from my sanguine hold."

"I not only applaud your sentiments," returned the count, "but will myself accompany you to Vienna, whenever you think proper; for I am equally impatient to repay, in part, the obligations I still hold to general Durand, for the interest

he took in your welfare ; and wish to enjoy the satisfaction of restoring you to him, as even still more deserving of his friendship than when he first admitted you to it. But remember, Sigismund, when every doubtful point is fully cleared, and we are amply provided with the credentials for accomplishing it—when this restless honour is appeased, you must resign a military profession, for I will never consent to a second separation. I am recalled, as it were, to life, by a restoration of the only four beings who could make it desirable ; they are equally necessary to the support of my declining years—remove but one, and the consequence may be fatal. Promise, then, you will instantly give up the commission, for which you can no longer have occasion—but rear as many young soldiers for the service of your king as you please, provided I grow grey-headed in the circle ; and, to do this, you must settle among us, that I may see your posterity blended with that of Henry De Vennuel."

This was leading to the desired point; for Sigismund felt, if even permitted to look forward to a union with Katherine, the count's approbation was essential to complete the happiness of that union; and, with the candour that marked his every action, he explained to his more than father the affection so long cherished by himself for the lovely daughter of St. Aubin, but acknowledging, at the same time, he had still to learn if that affection was reciprocal, as his absence, and the unpleasant circumstances which had intervened, left little for the pleasing expectations of hope, but every thing to fear.

The count heard him with evident pleasure, and, when he had ceased speaking, assured him his highest approbation must follow a choice so judicious, adding—
“ Now you remind me of mademoiselle St. Aubin, I had remarked, before I left Beauvoir, a pensive melancholy in that young lady that interested me much in her favour; for at that time aught that wore the semblance of sorrow was congenial to my

mind; and when, in my usual walks, I have passed her, accompanied by her younger brother, of whose presence she seemed totally unmindful, I have been half inclined to speak: but as it was my invariable rule to shun all society, this would have been an infringement on my general plan; and though I have sometimes even involuntarily checked my steps till she came nearly up, have then repented doing so, and passed rudely on: but she was not, I think, always thus pensivē?"

Sigismund lost not a word of the count's—and the varying emotions of his fine features during the conversation plainly indicated the sincerity of his attachment, with the interest he took in the recital, while the former continued—“ It will, however, be requisite for you to visit monsieur St. Aubin, on your return from Vienna, to convey not only my acknowledgments for the many instances of his valuable friendship, but to explain fully the motives which made me so remiss in

my attention to worth like his. You will then have an opportunity of convincing yourself how far his daughter merits the preference you are prepared to give her over her lovely sex, without whom, Sigismund, notwithstanding the early lessons I gave you, and which I now revoke, existence loses its richest blessings. But as I shall not accompany you to Languedoc, I promise to keep your secret most faithfully, till your return shall leave me at liberty to expatriate, as much as I think proper, on the perfections of the sister you intend giving my Josephine."

Sigismund's mind thus relieved, and his strength recruited, he lost no time in the completion of his memorial, which was no sooner accomplished, than he set out with the count for Vienna, intending first to seek the residence of general Durand; but though he believed fate had exhausted every shaft capable of inflicting a wound, it had still reserved one tinctured with disappointment, for, on his arrival, he found

the general had left the capital, and Albert was on service, with his company, some leagues distant.

But the count found little difficulty in obtaining an interview with the emperor, and his gracious reception, with the flattering marks of approbation he bestowed on Sigismund, having perused the papers laid before him, proved highly gratifying to the minds of both.

He not only congratulated him on his emancipation from such a combination of villainy, and his restoration to his family, name, and rights, but personally assured him every step should be taken to convince his brother-officers that he was reinstated in his esteem, and justified in every instance to his highest satisfaction ; nor had he a doubt remaining, but that he might, in the name of every officer, who had either served with him, or known his singular destiny, offer those congratulations on the event, which, if present, they would themselves have done with sincerity ; at the same time regretted his intention of

retiring from the army, and accepted with reluctance the commission which Sigismund, in the most graceful manner, begged to resign, asserting that only the gratitude he owed the count De Vennuel, whose wish it was, and his long estrangement from an amiable sister, his only relative, could have induced him to withdraw from public service—excuses the emperor allowed too powerful to be rejected; and having dismissed them in a manner equally flattering, they returned to Guienne, fully satisfied with the success of their journey.

Every obstacle thus removed, Sigismund next prepared for his visit into Languedoc, regardless of the arch inquiry of his sister as to the real purport of his anxiety to reach monsieur St. Aubin's, of whose family she frequently interrogated him: but he carefully guarded his secret, as to the confessional part, determined to ascertain himself what interest he yet held in mademoiselle St. Aubin's bosom, before he revealed to Josephine the extent of his own

passion ; and therefore parried her raillery, by an assurance that a chief motive for his going into Languedoe was to convince monsieur St. Aubin he was not altogether unmindful or unworthy the parental affection he had received from that worthy man, who would most sincerely rejoice in his present prosperity.

" Go then, my dear Sigismund," she said, with a smile; " and if you have influence sufficient to transplant so fair a flower as the blooming Katherine from so good a soil as the St. Aubin family, assure yourself I shall receive her with expanded arms."

" And I," said the countess, " will hail her a welcome addition to our little circle, which, indeed, is at present incomplete."

Sigismund thanked them for their promised attention to his fair friend, but expressed a doubt, if inclined to try his influence, of finding her disengaged; and taking with him a letter from the count to monsieur St. Aubin, he departed.

His now sanguine mind, exhilarated by

happiness surpassing what he had ever experienced, dwelt fondly on his present pursuit: the beautiful scenery through which he travelled helped to harmonize his feelings, and he contrasted the pleasure he now derived from a survey of them with the inattention with which, in his road from Beauvoir to Guienne, he had passed through others equally delightful; he was then tortured with apprehensions for the safety of his beloved De Vennuel, disappointed by the removal of the scarcely less revered St. Aubin, and stung to madness by the unfeeling reception he had met with beneath that roof where the smile of welcome had ever greeted his approach.

With these sentiments he arrived at the Castle, and no sooner learnt the count was actually then seeking him in Switzerland, than his already-oppressed mind, operating on health injured by the succession of painful events, in the existence he had for some months dragged through, yielded to the terror, which he strove not to divest himself of, that he must inevitably fall

into the power of the so much dreaded Francisco ; and a conviction that had he torn himself sooner from the fascinating charms which detained him with the De Loutherbourg's, he might have arrived in time, and prevented the fatal journey, overcame every consideration. How the count became acquainted with his late residence in Switzerland occurred not to his agitated senses, for all was swallowed up in the one dreadful surmise that actuated every thought ; and the benefactor to whom he owed every thing dragged to a public tribunal, accused of murder, and thrown into a dungeon by his means, was a picture too horrid for reason to bear unimpaired. The fever already preying on his weakened frame reached a frenzied height, and soon reduced him to the situation in which, on the count's arrival with his family, they found him. He had now left that benefactor in safety, surrounded with every blessing, and was himself rich in the possession of all that his most ardent wishes could aspire to, Katherine only excepted.

and to her he was hastening, with full power to plead the cause which had animated him through every hour of a tedious and painful separation from her; nor would he, for a moment, suffer imagination to rest on even a shade of doubt that the flower of hope might again meet the chilling blast of disappointment.

When he had satisfied himself of the welfare of the beloved family, and sought and received an assurance from the artless lips of his beloved friend that his passion was requited, with permission from the worthy St. Aubin to secure her hand, he would endeavour to gain some intelligence of madame Hoffman and the beauteous Laura, whom he hoped still to find residents of the province to which he was then journeying; and he pleased himself with reflections on the unexpected opportunity the removal of the St. Aubins into Languedoc would give him, for the completion of wishes formed when he was left the only protector of these charming wo-

men—namely, that he could introduce them to madame St. Aubin and his interesting Katherine, from a conviction their congenial minds would, in such society, find every consolation their sorrows needed: that pleasure was now in reserve, with a thousand nameless ones, to which he was hastening; and it was merely his external form that entered Lecon, for every mental faculty had superseded his arrival at the habitation of St. Aubin many hours.

But excess of joy is not less injurious to the mind's tranquillity than extremes of sorrow; and by the time Sigismund had reached the place of his destination, he found a short period was requisite to attune his mind to some degree of composure, previous to the expected interview with friends so dear; and he alighted at an hotel, near the abode of St. Aubin, where he ordered refreshments, more with an intention of furnishing an opportunity for the inquiries which he meant to make,

than to supply any want of nature, which was now with him but a secondary consideration.

" You have a gentleman in this neighbourhood, named St. Aubin, have you not ? " he said to the servant who attended him.

" Yes, your honour," replied the man, " and well the neighbourhood know it, for his goodness is unbounded ; and the poor have reason to bless the hour that brought him here. His late uncle was an excellent friend to them, yet his bounty fell short of this good gentleman ; they fly to him for advice in all their troubles, however difficult : in short, I do not know what they would do without their great benefactor."

" Still," thought Sigismund, " the same universal friend of mankind ; and Heaven has enlarged his power, in mercy to those whose defenceless state he glories in espousing.—And his family—is it in per-

fect health?" said Sigismund, again addressing the servant.

"Why, I am sorry to say, not at present," he returned, unmindful of the change even this doubtful reply occasioned in the countenance of his guest, "for they have not yet recovered their loss of the dear young lady who was buried about a week since—indeed, no one that knew her at all has, for never was seen a more lovely creature, and never one was more unhappy!"

"Dead!" repeated Sigismund, in agony—"dead, did you say?"

"Ay, your honour, I am sorry to say she is; and yet I ought not to be so, for now she must be an angel, and can suffer no longer. But surely," he continued, on first noticing the palsied limbs of Sigismund, whose knife and fork had fallen from his trembling hands—"pardon me, your honour—but sure you are not the young gentleman for whom she died? for if ever poor soul died for love, she did."

and mademoiselle Katherine, who really adored her, it is supposed, will never be happy again."

Wiping the cold dew that dropped from every feature, and gasping for respiration, Sigismund faintly articulated—"Of whom then have you been speaking? Did you not tell me mademoiselle St. Aubin was dead?"

"God forbid, your honour!" replied the man: "no, monsieur is surely too good to have such a calamity befall him, and I hope, at least, I never shall live to see the day."

"Torture me then no longer, but say who is dead, if Katherine St. Aubin still lives?"

"I was speaking of mademoiselle Hoffman," said the man (more than ever convinced Sigismund must have been her lover, by the fright he believed his account of her death had thrown him into), "and mademoiselle St. Aubin was so fond of her, that she never left her day or night: but what is more wonderful, notwithstanding

her senses were gone long before monsieur St. Aulin came into this part, she always knew his daughter ; and after she first saw her, was never satisfied but when she was near her."

Sigismund attempted not to check the volatility of his informer, for having in part recovered the shock which his own supposition of Katherine's death had hurried him into, he was much too deeply interested in the fate of her lovely friend to lose one tittle of her unhappy story. A thousand ideas crowded on his yet strongly agitated mind, and he eagerly demanded where madame Hoffman, her mother, resided ?

" Bless your honour," he returned, " she never reached Languedoc, for the carriage in which she was travelling hither, with her son and daughter, broke down a long distance from this, by which accident her arm was shattered, and as it could never be properly cured, she died shortly afterwards. When monsieur Hoffman arrived here with his sister, she was quite melan-

choly, for they said one trouble had come so fast upon another, that her reason was upset: first, her father was killed in the war; then she lost her lover in a very strange way, for he disappeared, and no one ever knew what became of him—some people think he must have been murdered privately, and others that he concealed himself on purpose from her, because he was not so fond of her as she was of him—but that I never will believe, for the man who could not love such a beautiful creature must have no heart at all; and they do say he was fond of another lady: to be sure, ‘first love is sweetest,’ as they saying is; but I think it must go hard with a man to give up such a woman as mademoiselle Laura, especially when she loved so truly,” and he still kept his eye fixed on Sigismund, as if to discover if his conjectures respecting *him* were right, by reading his thoughts.

They were evidently of a painful nature, and such as he could not suppress. He would have given the world to be alone,

yet was anxious to learn more of the lovely victim, whose fate he heard with emotions that dispersed every pleasing expectation in his late happy arrangement ; and conscious of the man's pointed observation, as also that the agitation he had been surprised into might fully justify the supposition of his being her lover, he said—“ Tell me, good fellow, is her brother, monsieur Hoffman, still here ? for though I am not, as you suppose, the faithless lover of mademoiselle Laura, he is my particular friend.”

“ Oh yes,” answered the man, half doubting the assertion, and still more inclined to adhere to his own opinion, “ he is on the point of marriage with a young lady of great fortune in the neighbourhood, who was also very fond of his sister ; but she took more to mademoiselle St. Aubin, and, it is thought, because she also was, like herself, very melancholy, though not out of her senses ; but she loved to walk with her to madame Hoffman's tomb, for she was brought here to be buried, and

she would lean over it, while poor demoiselle Laura hung wreaths of flowers, which she had made purposely, on it, and strewed others round. They used to look like two angels of sorrow, for they were both so pale, yet so beautiful, they never appeared like flesh and blood: now demoiselle Katherine goes alone to the tomb, and is so inconsolable for the loss of her friend, that folks say her good father and mother are distracted lest she should lose her senses before the gentleman whom she is so fond of comes back, and at present he is a great way off."

" And where," said Sigismund, interrupting his loquacity, " is madame Hoffman buried?" determined in his own mind to pay his mournful tribute to her departed worth before he suffered pleasure again to pervade his mind from an interview with the amiable St. Aubin—a pleasure that was likely to meet a considerable alloy from the account he had received of Katherine.

" If it is for my supposed unhappy des-

tiny her gentle nature is thus distressed," he inwardly articulated—" if for me the tortures of suspense have robbed her cheeks of their roseate hue, I may dare to hope my presence, under such happy circumstances, will restore her wonted peace, and arrest her declining health ere it has destroyed so fair a fabric."

In answer to his inquiry, the man described the spot he wished to find, and offered to accompany him ; but Sigismund, who wanted no witness of his feelings, preferred going alone, and having left his baggage as a hostage for his return, walked out unattended. He was not long in finding the melancholy memorial of the hapless Laura: and her name, her age, with the period of her release, engraven on a plain marble monument, which told also it was the repository of her mother's sacred ashes, awakened every sentiment of respect and brotherly affection, which he had once cherished for the sainted sufferer : but these sensations were mingled with the tenderest commiseration for her early

fate, and dread of what till that moment he had not even suspected, that Laura's friendship for him had been of a nature inimical to her happiness, since convinced, from the warmth of his expressions whenever Katherine was the theme of conversation, that she must have possessed his fondest regard, a truth he sought not to conceal, though delicacy had always withheld an explanation of its being actually so ; yet, to her nice discernment, he was well aware it must have been evident, and he now felt for every pang such a conviction must have given her, if really attached to him : but the singularity of her becoming so partial to Katherine, of chance having so conspired with his wishes of bringing them together, and the friendship which had been the result, he dwelt on with melancholy satisfaction ; and having devoted some time to the hapless ~~re~~lics whose peaceful habitation he contemplated with pious sorrow, he hastened to thank the commiserating angel for having

thus kindly poured the balm of consolation into the wounded bosom of the poor Laura.

On inquiring at the villa of monsieur St. Aubin for its hospitable owner, he was conducted into an apartment elegantly fitted up, and in which many parts of the furniture brought to his remembrance the room in which he had seen the same deposited at Beauvoir. A fire-screen which Katherine had painted, and for which he had often prepared her colours, or read to her while she was thus employed, was among the first objects that caught his attention. Her instrument also, to which he had so often listened with delight, was now open, and, among some pieces she had apparently been playing, the very one which had first induced him to assign his partiality for it to mademoiselle Laura, with the probable cause, namely, that it was also a favourite with mademoiselle St. Aubin. But a short time only was allowed for his reflections—Monsieur St. Aubin, who strictly observed, with every other law of society, that of politeness, hearing

that a stranger desired to see him (for it was one of the domestics he found at the villa, and had retained in his service, who had given Sigismund admittance), instantly left the garden in which he was walking, to attend the summons, but had no sooner entered the room than his friendly arms were extended in silent rapture, and a moment longer saw Sigismund clasped to his affectionate bosom. The feelings of each, for some minutes, mocked the effort that would have given them utterance; and it was not till he had twice released him, and again folded him in the kind embrace, that St. Aubin was sufficiently collected to say—"Is it possible? Dare I, my young friend, trust to my senses a belief that I really see our lost Ethelwald?"

"In form, but not in name," he replied; "for with the new ties Heaven has restored to me, I have acquired one that had I announced myself by, would leave me still a stranger; I am, therefore, at present, the Ethelwald you once loved,

and am come to claim the affection of your charming family, with that interest my long absence has left due."

St. Aubin gazed on him with increasing wonder; his air, and even improved manners, with the elegant neatness of his yet fashionable dress, so ill accorded with the description given of his supposed father, and the way in which he had left Breslaw, that he could scarcely rely on his own judgment; but his heart powerfully acknowledged the claims of Ethelwald, and he was assuredly too well remembered to leave room for imposition.

"That you will," he said, looking affectionately at him, "fully explain the present mystery, I am well satisfied: but, at present, I am mostly interested in your languid appearance, which denotes recent ill health, and, I must own, diminishes the happiness I should otherwise feel in having an opportunity of congratulating you on a destiny the very reverse of that we have been so many months regretting."

"It is to relieve my valued friend from

that suspense I was justified in believing he would feel for my strange and degraded situation, to express my gratitude for every proof of his revered friendship, and to entreat from him permission to seek in his family that happiness so essential to make the change I have experienced desirable, that I have followed him into Languedoc."

He then partially related his disappointment and unpleasant reception in Beauvoir, at his late residence, as also that which awaited him at the chateau.

"I find, Ethelwald, for I doubt if you will give me a name to address you by which I shall like so well, because so long used to love that," said St. Aubin, "that you have much to relate, and I much to hear; but as I have not grown parsimonious in your absence, I must, as usual, be surrounded by my little circle before you begin, for they cannot be less interested than myself in the recital we expect from you."

"Indeed, my dear sir," he replied, "I

began to think you were so, from having thus long delayed introducing me to madame St. Aubin and my amiable Katherine."

"Ah, Ethelwald," he returned, in an altered voice, "you must not expect to see the blooming acquaintance of your early days—she has lately had a task much too severe for her affectionate heart and delicate frame to sustain uninjured; and the loss of a friend for whom she was deeply interested has nearly deprived myself and her sorrowing mother of the dearest blessing Heaven had given us;" and he passed his hand hastily across his eyes, in order to conceal the parental tear that glistened in them.

Sigismund was not less agitated, and taking his hand, said—"I have already heard, at the hotel in which I stopped, much to interest me, and account for the sable dress in which I find you. I knew the unfortunate Laura, her valued mother, and the deserving young man whose sister she was, and will tell you, my dear sir,

much of them, if, from their intimacy with you, that remains still to be done: but, oh! in pity to my tortured feelings, do not confirm what I was also taught to believe, that Katherine, my beloved and early friend, must fall a sacrifice to the esteem she cherished for the child of sorrow whose tomb I have just visited!"

"Alas! poor victim of sensibility!" returried St. Aubin, "her trial was indeed great; yet from her brother I have heard sufficient to exculpate you from having unjustly endeavoured to gain her affections, which, delicate as it is to assert, were evidently placed on you, though hopeless of a return; nor am I one of those who would cruelly term her having suffered that to be the case a weakness unjustifiable, a want of spirit, and all the *et ceteras* so often heaped upon the sufferer, who needs no aggravation to unrequited love; for I have studied the human heart, and know there are situations in life—concomitant circumstances, that render such events unavoidable, and will ever stand forth the avowed



champion of those whom a superiority of manners, and valuable endowments of mind and person in the object they are in the habit of associating with, have led involuntarily too far in the danger, before they were aware of the consequence, and from which too few, having done so, can recede. But in the present case, my dear Ethelwald," he continued, " I have certainly much room for astonishment, since I must own that I have seldom met with a young woman so truly interesting, so lovely as mademoiselle Hoffman, and should suppose she must have been, at the time you knew her (which was before sorrow had completed its ravage), of all others the one most calculated to have inspired you with congenial sentiments; indeed, that no man, not prepossessed in favour of another, could possibly have beheld her with indifference, much less him to whose care she was, I am given to understand, consigned by a dying father."

St. Aubin was not unacquainted with his daughter's secret; he had marked her

early and growing attachment to the companion of her youth, nor had ever wished to check a prepossession so much in favour of his own wishes ; for Ethelwald's heart had been the study of many anxious hours ; he knew it would be a prize to whomsoever possessed it ; nor could it be wondered at that he should wish to procure it for this deservedly-loved child, particularly when Ethelwald's artless love for her was revealed in every boyish action : but since he had become a neighbour of the beauteous Laura, had heard her tale of sorrow, and was convinced the main source was hopeless love, and that for Ethelwald, he could scarcely satisfy himself that the early and still unacknowledged attachment he had formed at Beauvoir could be sufficient security against such powerful attractions ; and he wished, before he appeared to notice his emotions on hearing the state of Katherine's health, to convince himself that he had brought back the same spotless integrity, the same candid and generous

disposition, he had taken with him; and therefore dwelt on the sorrows of Laura, to ascertain how far he was acquainted with her affection for him — affection which he believed of no common kind, since even the shattered remains of what it was plainly indicated the exalted mind she had possessed, before the succession of events which had wrecked her reason.

“ That I feel more, sir,” he said, “ for the fate of mademoiselle Hoffman than I have power to express, those only who best know my heart can testify; and had I been earlier acquainted with her sentiments in my favour, I must have been still more wretched; but a knowledge—nay, even a suspicion of them, never reached me, till I had no longer the power of mitigating her affliction, to do which I should assuredly have sacrificed my own happiness, for such it would have been, since, though with you I agree, and ever did, in thinking her one of nature’s fairest specimens, and knew her accomplished mind exceeded what is generally found in her sex, yet I

carried in my bosom an invulnerable shield, which even her perfections could never perforate. My warmest esteem was ever hers, but my affections were laid at a shrine from which not even a perfect knowledge of her mental as well as personal graces could lure them; yet, to have promoted the peace of such a woman, I would have resigned the dearest hope I possessed — a hope which alone animated me in the field of honour, soothed me on the bed of sickness, and cheered the horrors of my residence with a lawless banditti—ruffians, who tore me from every tie!—Yes, St. Aubin,” he exclaimed with energy, “even when degraded, pronounced the offspring of the vilest wretch existing, and compelled to associate with villains who revered no law but plunder, though compelled to resign every idea, every prospect of again beholding her, I dared to love with fervour your angelic daughter; for why should I longer conceal what has been my fondest hope? Again I assert, had Laura lived, I must have been

the sacrifice, for the preservation of her happiness was a duty I owed her gallant father, strengthened by the esteem which bound me also to her exemplary mother : but the period in which I could have offered her reparation for her past suffering is no more ; I am therefore at liberty to repeat, that unless sanctioned by yourself to make a tender of my hand to her who has, from my infant days, possessed my unrivalled heart, that wealth which Providence has given me as my undisputed right, and which was my father's, whose name, as Sigismund Riviers, I now bear, will no longer contribute comfort to the possessor : say then, may I dare hope you will sanction, nay, plead my cause with the gentle Katherine ? say only yourself and madame St. Aubin will not reject my entreaties to be allowed the exclusive right of calling you by the endearing appellation of father, and I will not despair."

The full-fraught heart of St. Aubin needed no entreaties to become all that he wished him, for he was satisfied Katherine

alone possessed his early and only attachment ; and not only promised to befriend his suit, but led him instantly to the apartment of his amiable wife, and the now indeed altered Katherine, to whom he said, on entering—" I have, my love, brought you a visitor—monsieur Riviers," he added, introducing him to madame St. Aubin, and then to his daughter.

The roses which, had she possessed them, would have doubtless fled the cheeks of the latter on beholding the form before her, were now for a moment recalled by the surprise of so strange an introduction; the name had passed over her agitated mind unremembered, but every faculty was suspended, as she looked on the improved figure of Sigismund, her first and only love : but Laura crossed her memory, and though she slept in the peaceful grave, to which also she believed herself hastening, she would have thought it a sacrilege to the ashes of her friend, had she for a moment thought the sentiment she then felt was love for him.

Madame St. Aubin, who needed no other conviction than the present conduct of her husband to feel justified in expressing her pleasure in the interview, welcomed him to her maternal heart with a mother's transport, and already anticipated the recovery of her child, whose every happiness was, she well knew, centered in the deserving youth before her; taking her hand, therefore, and placing it in his, she said—"Is my Katherine the only one among us perturbed in her congratulations on the arrival of this wanderer?" But Katherine had no longer the power to offer them; unable to sustain the contest of love and friendship, unable to account for the presence of this beloved object, and that under another name, she had fainted.

CHAPTER VI.
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BUT when, on recovering, she found herself still supported by him, and his trembling hands, with affectionate solicitude, applying restoratives to her temples, and entreating her to speak, every sentiment gave way to the powerful one he wished to inspire, while she articulated, with difficulty—"Ethelwald! what am I to infer from all this?"

Delighted at seeing her thus far recovered, he exclaimed—"That I am still the Ethelwald you ever knew me, changed only in name—that my family and fortune are such as empower me to offer you my hand, and that monsieur St. Aubin will sanction my pretensions, if she for whom alone I have stemmed the horrors of my

late destiny, will give me room to hope I have not so long loved in vain!"

"Ah, my poor Laura!" she ejaculated, without regarding him, "if your pure spirit can witness this scene, will it not reproach Ethelwald for his violation of your rights, and me for listening to his persuasive arguments?"

"Surely not, my dear girl," said St. Aubin. "Laura is much too happy for her felicity to depend on the transactions of this sublunary state; and I am perfectly satisfied his honour can never be questioned on her account, since he solemnly fulfilled every injunction of captain Hoffman, and was unacquainted with her unfortunate partiality for himself: but since your scruples rest on a point that can be so easily adjusted, we will withhold all the approbation he solicits till he has had an interview with monsieur Hoffman, and if he justifies his conduct, and acquits him of ever slighting the friendship of Laura, your objections can no longer remain, and

I shall be at liberty to trust you will yet give me, in Sigismund Riviers, a son worthy the affection I have ever cherished for him."

Raising her beauteous eyes, swimming with tears, and taking her father's hand, she said—"A few months since, my dear sir, I should have thought the request you now make an invaluable one, for I will not deny that my youthful affections were Ethelwald's, and that I anticipated his return as the æra of my happiness—but it was a blessing I had long since believed for ever lost to me; and since, my knowledge of Laura's sufferings have taught myself a conviction, that should we ever meet again, which I doubted, I ought to suppress every sentiment but that of friendship for him."

"Hear me then, Katherine," replied Sigismund, distractedly, "when, in presence of your dear and respected parents, I vow from this moment to resign every blessing I possess, and become henceforth an exile from that world I had but just begun to

enjoy. Remember, I have been educated a misanthrope, but with a soul expanding to the sacred duties of society, and glowing to become a useful member of it, you condemn me to spend the residue of a hateful life in the severity of that school which nearly tinctured with unwarrantable disgust of mankind my dawn of life, the gloom of which was softened only by the kindness and affection of your worthy father; I now return to it without the consolation of one friend, for I will steel my heart against every claim, and become a far more rigid, of course more guilty voluntary of despair than even the count De Venuiel ever was."

"Neither must that be, Ethelwald," she returned, still unmindful that his new name had been more than once repeated:—"I rejoice to hear Heaven has rewarded worth like yours with affluence; go then, and obey the dictates of that generous heart, which in childhood led you to commiserate the children of poverty—go, and enjoy that world in which you were

formed to shine : but for myself, the more I am gratified by your affectionate offer, the more satisfied of its sincerity, the more I feel I ought not to burthen you with a being who is hastening fast to another world ; my declining health and broken spirits no longer fit me for your society, and I should quit you with a reluctance that must mar the peace of my dying hour."

" Say not, my child, thou wilt leave us," exclaimed St. Aubin. " There is, my Katherine, this alternative for the exertions I entreat you to make : Ethelwald and happiness are before you ; strive then to live for his sake ; or, if thou wilt reject every effort to save thee, remember thy death seals the future unhappiness of thy wretched parents, if not that of him you acknowledge to have been thy first and only love."

The contest was now great. Few daughters had venerated their parents as she had done—none had loved with more sincerity than herself; and her extreme

sensibility, from a constant attendance on mademoiselle Hoffman, had acquired increasing melancholy, which her conviction of Sigismund's loss rendered her incapable of struggling against : this, aided by decreasing health, the result of her disappointed hopes, and the suspense in which his mysterious fate left all who were interested for him, made her wait with calm resignation for the death she believed inevitable ; but when surrounded by those who now entreated her to live, and assured that her existence was requisite to their happiness, she was obliged to remember it was a duty she owed the authors of her being, and promised monsieur St. Aubin, if her life was spared, to fulfil his wishes, as far as lay in her own power to do.

" Then you will live, my Katherine," said the transported Sigismund, " to repay Riviers for all he has suffered since last we parted?—and I shall yet introduce to an amiable sister the lovely friend who supplied the place of one to me before I knew Heaven had ever given me such a

tie—yet lead to the altered De Valmont the pensive Katherine, whose interesting appearance had half induced him to break his vow, by holding converse with your sex, to his lovely countess, and the son who has been so wonderfully restored to him."

" You hear, my love," replied St. Aubin, addressing his daughter, " how much our wanderer has to communicate, and forget how impatient we have long been to know what had become of our singular and unhappy neighbour; yet, now that our curiosity may be gratified by the termination of suspense, you are totally indifferent to it."

" That is impossible," she returned, " for my present health bears a fatal testimony that I have never been unmindful of what concerned my early friend."

" Let him then," said Sigismund, raising her hand to his lips, " by devoting the residue of his life to her happiness, prove his gratitude for that too-kind solicitude, and, by the most affectionate at-

tention, sooth each hour of pain, till the returning roses shall again bloom on the now-deserted cheek of my sweet Katherine."

Pleased to see even the languid smile that played over her pale features, and willing to divert the present conversation, which had been too much for the whole party, St. Aubin endeavoured to change the subject by saying—" Katherine, you are a monopolizer, for only you could have made monsieur Riviers unmindful of his friend Albert, after whom he has not yet inquired."

" An omission, my dear sir," he returned, " Albert himself, I am well convinced, would pardon, while he knew my anxious mind was unsatisfied as to the sentiments of his lovely sister; however, I have to regret that his absence from Vienna, when I was last there, which is but a short time since, precluded the pleasure I expected to have derived from an interview with him."

" Indeed," said mademoiselle St. Aubin,

"you have so many singular events to elucidate, that I am getting impatient for an explanation of them, particularly since you have, I think, named several new-fbund relations, of whom, when we parted, you had no idea ; and from the pleasure with which you speak of them, I am tempted to believe they are different characters to those we were given to understand had at first asserted their pretensions to you."

"Your candid avowal of esteem, my adored Katherine," he returned, "and the hopes on which I am bid to rest, have enabled me to relate, whenever you are prepared to hear it, a tale, replete indeed with wonders, and to recount scenes in which I have been a principal performer—But I must not now add, unhappily so, since it was requisite I should be such, to regain a name of which villainy had depriyed me, and with it an ample fortune, that will enable us to enjoy the full sunshine of benevolence, by securing the comforts of our fellow-creatures ; they have eventually re-

stored me to happiness and Katherine, therefore I cannot regret the trial under which I had nearly sunk."

He then related, as concisely as time would permit, to the astonished party, all that had transpired, from the period of his leaving Beauvoir to that of his arrival at the hotel, not excepting the intelligence gained from his attendant there; he then produced the count's letter, which he prefaced by the statement of occurrences that St. Aubin considered a sufficient apology for his silence; and, in turn, acquainted Sigismund with the welfare of both Albert and his friend the general, from both of whom he had, but a few days before, received letters, in which he was still a leading subject, and his loss still regretted, as, from the date of them, no intelligence of his return to Vienna could have reached them.

Katherine, who had fondly hung on every word Sigismund uttered, became so interested in the relation, that her delighted parents already flattered themselves he

had yet returned in time to rescue their treasure from an early grave, for thither her silent sorrow was evidently hastening her, and the supposition rendered him, if possible, more dear to each.

On the following day St. Aubin called on Hoffman, to acquaint him with the arrival of a friend in Languedoc, who was impatient to take him by the hand; but when he gave that friend the appellation of Sigismund Riviers, the shade of disappointment passed over those features which had been, for a moment, buoyed by the expectation ever predominant in his friendly and grateful breast, that the lost De Valmont would yet be restored to his affectionate embrace, and he said, visibly chagrined—"As I am acquainted with no gentleman, monsieur St. Aubin, of that name, the mention of it ill repays me for the disappointment I have sustained. The pleasure which animated every feature on your entrance, and the message you were the herald of, induced me to hope I

'should, in the friend thus announced, find De Valmont, the generous protector of my unhappy family—he for whom I am too much, too deeply interested, to be satisfied while his fate is uncertain: but as the gentleman you have named is at present a stranger to me, I am at a loss to surmise what the purport of his business can be."

St. Aubin, wishing to enjoy his surprise, answered—"That suspense can be very soon terminated by your returning with me, for I have left him to the care of madame St. Aubin and my daughter, while I came to acquaint you with his wish; perhaps you will say, he might as well have accompanied me, but to tell you the truth, the ladies could not be prevailed on to part with him."

"That is at least an inducement for my returning with you to seek him," replied Hoffman; "for a man so highly favoured by the fair sex cannot be unworthy some little attention from his own; I will therefore accompany you."

St. Aubin accepted the proposal, and, in their way, varied the conversation, that he might be even less prepared for what awaited him.

On his entering the room, Sigismund was sitting near Katherine, with his arm resting on the back of her chair, and too intent on what she was saying to observe their approach; but Hoffman's rapture brooked no restraint, and, regardless of the spectators, he clasped the hand of his friend, and pressed it with silent fervour to his heart.

"Ethelwald! friend! preserver! guardian of my defenceless mother, my hapless sister!" now broke from the lips of the astonished Hoffman: "dare I believe," he added, "my present transport is not too extatic to be real? Yet the smile of joy thy presence has already diffused convinces me it must be so. I have then again found the friend whose mysterious departure has thrown a shade on every little prospect of happiness that has since awaited me, while the more melancholy me-

ments of the intermediate time have received additional gloom from thy uncertain fate: but you are restored to me, and all is forgot!"

Sigismund shared the pleasure of this interview in a no less sincere degree. Many days were devoted to the sacred rights of love and friendship, during which he learnt the particulars of what had passed on his disappearing from Breslau, as also the events which had transpired in Hoffman's family, from their removal to the period of Laura's death.

On that of his mother he dwelt with expressions of unfeigned sorrow, and lamented her loss as an endless source of regret; but on the sorrows of his sister he touched more lightly, passing over her hopeless affection with a delicacy that did honour to his feelings, and made him still more dear to the friendship of Sigismund.

He then reverted to his own marriage with mademoiselle De Montaign, which had only been delayed by the long-expected death of Laura; and he now ventured

to express his hopes that he was to be kept in countenance by the union of his friend with mademoiselle St. Aubin—" Whose attachment," he continued, " has been much too fervent for her lovely frame; and had your return been procrastinated, my dear Sigismund, you had certainly lost a valuable prize."

This he had also reason to believe, but saw, with heartfelt satisfaction, that every day added to her already recruited strength and left him every thing to hope from her increasing health and spirits. He had wrote to Henry De Venuiel a statement of his affections, as also the situation in which he had found the object of them, and entreated Josephine would prepare herself to receive a sister every way worthy her fondest esteem, for that it was his intention, with the count's approbation, in addition to that received from St. Aubin, to make mademoiselle St. Aubin his wife—" Though," he added, " it will be requisite I should return, previous to such an event, for the arrangement of a suitable

preparation for the reception of my Katherine. Yet even that short separation will be a painful one, and I still delay fixing the period for it."

Henry's answer was accompanied by one from the count, and a second from Josephine, each fraught with the warmest sentiments of approbation, asserting the exalted character given by all who knew St. Aubin fully justified a belief that the daughter of such a man must be a valuable acquisition to their family.

Flattered by the contents of his packet, and impatient to verify their expectations in presenting Katherine to them, he eagerly acquainted her father with the purport of his letters, and entreated he would intercede for him with her to fix an early day for the completion of their union ; and it was at last decided that that which saw Hoffman the husband of mademoiselle De Montaign, with whom Sigismund was much pleased, should give him also Katherine St. Aubin ; he therefore reluctantly tore himself from the happy circle,

and once more returned to Guienne, for the final settlement of his affairs preparatory to his nuptials.

"I have been thinking, my dear Sigismund," said the count, a few evenings after his arrival, "that we have, perhaps, wrapped ourselves in a fancied security as to this mutual enemy of ours, and, lost in the delirium of our present happiness, do not remember the venom may only slumber, for destroyed we know it is not."

"And yet," replied Sigismund, "what further can we have to fear, for over your life his boasted power has long since ended? and for myself, he dare not make a second claim, and certainly will not risk it."

"Of that I am only half convinced," returned the count; "for it is evident, by the good Jacqueline's letter, he does not know you are really not his child, since she owned to a deception with which she could not acquaint him; of course, the secret died with her, and he may yet torture us with some dark design—nay, for ought we know, be at this time plotting."

"What steps, then," said Sigismund, "in that case, shall we take, to render his venom harmless?"

Roderigo had promised to forward intelligence of all that passed in the mountain when his flight was discovered; and this was to be sent under cover to the chevalier De Valmont at Beauvoir: but no such letter had yet reached him, and the count had awakened terrors which a succession of happy events had left him no room to attend to; but the fatal claim, against which he had no other proof than the written testimony of the departed Jacqueline, now roused every faculty to exertion, and determined him at least to put in immediate execution a plan he had long meditated, which was, to seek the former residence of Francisco, near the bay, and, by so doing, endeavour to find the spot in which his parents had been interred, that he might remove their sacred dust to a place more fitted for its reception.

This project he now imparted to the

count, who, though he agreed in believing it must secure a stronger confirmation of Jacqueline's relation, still feared, that finding himself thus betrayed, he would more powerfully assert his pretensions, which even the spoils taken from monsieur and madame Riviers, or, indeed, the discovery of their place of internment, could not set aside.

But the spot to which they were consigned might possibly be traced, with some little attention, as the situation of the hut was fortunately remembered by Frederick, who was still retained in the household.

It was therefore agreed that Oswald and he should instantly set out, at least to try the success of their undertaking ; and Sigismund felt relieved by the reflection that he had, in part, fulfilled a duty he owed to the relics of such parents, and still adhered in believing even their dust would secure him from the power of the hated Francisco.

But a more permanent security was preparing by the Hand which had laid the foundation of their present felicity, and furled the dark veil so long drawn over the fate of the worthy count; his setting sun was to be unobscured by even the shadow of doubt, and a long continuance of sorrow enhanced the value of those blessings which were returned him twofold.

The long reign of Francisco's villany made him fearless of the justice he despised, and against whose laws he believed himself secure. He once thought—but it was early in life—that having, by his successful rapine, amassed sufficient wealth to make him comfortable, he would become what the world termed an honest man: but nature had not given him a heart in which the principles that form the character existed; avarice was its darling passion, and no sacrifice was too great for what might satisfy its insatiate thirst—no plot so deep, in which he would not engage for reward—no enterprise so re-

plete with danger as to deter him from the hopes of plunder; the pursuit left no room for reflection, and had it, the success which crowned every undertaking was sufficient to stifle the little remorse which might have tinged those reflections before he became the dauntless bravo.

But no exploit in which he was ever engaged, no scheme he had ever effected, promised so rich a reward as the sequel of that which had enabled him to place, as he believed, his own child in the count De Venniel's family; for it had left him a reserve to which he could always apply. A knowledge of his heart persuaded him, that if the boy survived the count, he would leave him an affluent fortune, on which he could make his own claims; or, if he had occasion for assistance before that time, it was only acknowledging the child as his own, and, to procure a pardon, confess at whose instigation, added to his own poverty, he was prevailed on to make the exchange, at the same time revealing his having delivered the young

count to madame Riviers—in which case he expected to be liberally rewarded, and his son amply provided for.

But this scheme was frustrated by the management of Oswald, in the well-concealed residence of the count De Venneuil, for whom, during twenty years, Francisco had made an unsuccessful search, and at last persuaded himself he must have retired to some remote part of the world, when, as if in order to complete his villainy, which had been, in every other instance, still prosperous, chance threw Sigismund again in his way.

Among his vile associates, who were numerous, the brother of Eustace had been a striking picture of early depravity: from inclination, not necessity, he had forsaken the paths of rectitude and parental advice, to join those pests of society. But a daring robbery these desperadoes had committed occasioned so strict a search, that many of them, who had been dispersed at the time, were afraid to return to their usual rendezvous. Sebastian had

an asylum gladly opened to the prodigal wanderer; he told his tale of penitence, and the fond parent, happy to save the lost boy, trusted to his sincerity, and fostered the thankless child, who wanted but an opportunity for sin, to become again the sinner. Hubert, the son of Francisco, had not that resource; he was provided with a remnant of the plunder for which he fled, and for some time subsisted on it; but, in a state of inebriety, he enlisted with a party of Austrians, who passed through the village in which he had secreted himself, till enabled to regain the forest in which the greater part of the banditti resided.

The unexpected arrival of Eustace at home, and the offer of such a service for his brother, compelled Sebastian to accept it, or throw off the mask by again eloping as he had before done: but not having quite determined on the plan he should adopt, he agreed to return with him, and take the situation thus offered.—

To satisfy his father how good a master he had procured for him, Eustace entered fully on general Durand's partiality for him, and related all that he had heard of Sigismund, and the singular manners of the chevalier, his supposed father, as gained by himself during the late visit the general, his own master, had made at Beauvoir.

Scarce three weeks had passed, after his arrival at Schweidnitz, when, in a sentinel to whom he had a message to deliver from Sigismund, he recognised his old friend Hubert; the surprise of each exceeded all description, and ended in their appointing an hour, when he should be off guard, for a full explanation of all that had befallen them since they parted. Hubert's relation was first given, and, in return, Sebastian spoke of the manner in which he had gained his present master, with the particulars of who he was, as related by his brother. Each cursed the destiny that had separated them so long from

the lads in the forest ; nor did they part without preconcerting what steps to pursue for regaining them.

The singularity of Sebastian's story relative to his master struck Hubert more forcibly when alone ; and the more he ruminated on it, the more it convinced him that the chevalier De Valmont could be no other than the count De Venniel, of whom he had heard so much from his father, for Oswald had been also mentioned as the faithful servant of the former, and as being the favourite domestic of the latter ; he was familiar with the name, and therefore took an early opportunity of acquainting Francisco with the discovery he hesitated not to believe he had made : but, by a mischance for which he could never account, he lost the letter intended to convey the intelligence, and which Sigismund found on the battery in its unfinished state ; nor was it till they reached Breslaw that Hubert was enabled to forward a second, on the receipt of which Francisco hastened to him, and learnt such

particulars, strengthened by the report of Sebastian, as left him in no doubt of its being the son he had so long sought in vain, and, of course, that the chevalier was no other person than the count De Vennuel.

Every former hope was now revived, and he was some time ruminating on the plan he should adopt to turn it to the best advantage: but Hubert and Sebastian, in the mean time, wanted his assistance. They were each too anxious to regain the forest, to let him depart without them; and as the former made no scruple of deserting, the latter felt as little repugnance at leaving his master in a manner equally abrupt; and a night was fixed on for their design, the result of which is already known: but the failure of their scheme determined the fate of Sigismund, and Francisco's project took a different turn from that on which he had first nearly decided.

Convinced a severe punishment, if not death, awaited Hubert for his violation of

duty, he determined at least to divert the attention of his officers, by a public avowal of his relationship to the accuser, for with Sigismund being such, he had made himself acquainted, and thought he should be well revenged by his power of humiliating the proud boy, for whom a deeper plot was yet brooding in his dark mind, which was to remove him by stratagem to the forest, where he intended keeping a strict watch over him, till an opportunity offered for his visiting the count, from whom it was his intention to extort money on different pleas, founded on revealing the fate of his own son, the safety of Ethelwald, and, above all, a threat of disclosing the dying assertion of monsieur Riviers that he had fallen unfairly, and that himself was sworn to bring his murderer to public justice, which he would do in the person of the count De Venniel: but all was defeated by that Providence by whom virtue is rewarded and villany scourged.

Francisco's rage, when Sigismund had

escaped his snare, exceeded all bounds, lighting on every one but him actually concerned in it. The severity of Roderigo towards his son, from the time he was brought as such from Breslaw, and the contempt in which he had always appeared to hold him, added to the secret power he maintained over this tyrant, deceived even his ceaseless vigilance, while Theodore became the innocent victim of his ungoverned fury: but cruelty could not wring from him a knowledge he did not possess, and he patiently endured the punishment no one dared alleviate, lest they should be themselves suspected. Yet to all his departure seemed a miracle, for which they were unable to account. Roderigo assumed a cool indifference on the subject, merely saying—"It was little more than he expected, for that, for his part, he always suspected gentlemen who exhibited so much sensibility and fine feelings, of that duplicity and cunning he had left convincing proofs of his possessing; and thought his best plan, if he

meant to regain him, was to set out instantly for the count De Venuiel's, as, in all probability, the father who could support him in affluence would be preferred to the one nature had given him."

But this he knew he dared not do, from a conviction that Sigismund, having first reached Beauvoir, would have too well explained all he had gone through, and the occupation of Francisco, to make it safe for him to follow; "therefore," to divert his suspicions, Roderigo continued, "the safety of thy brave comrades can be of little consequence, when thou hast recovered him, and handled the reward so long expected."

"Dastard!" exclaimed Francisco, regardless of the irony, "could I now glut my revenge, I would seclude him from even the light of day, till I had effected my purpose; nor am I satisfied yet that I will not seek him at Beauvoir: the count's life is still in my hands, and shall be a hostage for my safety; but that boy shall return with me, or I will be well rewarded.

for giving him up.—Yet, fear not, Roderigo; I shall not endanger thy safety or that of my fellows, for I tell thee, De Ven-  
nuiel dare not detain me."

" It is, however, a risk I shall not ven-  
ture," said Roderigo; " for when you begin  
such a journey, I shall follow Montaldo's  
example, and take my leave of the party,  
who will then be at liberty to disperse  
themselves, for few, I think, will be mad  
enough to take such a hazard; neverthe-  
less, I would have you take the bent of  
your own inclinations."

Francisco was irresolute, and succeed-  
ing days saw him still furious with disap-  
pointment, still undetermined how to act;  
for the continued success of the banditti  
agreeing so well with his sordid interest,  
left him unwilling to desert them; yet a  
secret impulse to gain, on Sigismund's  
account, what would be his own property,  
and subject to no division, urged him to  
seek the count—a point he had not given  
up, when he was arrested by that justice  
he had so often evaded.

Himself, with Hubert and three of his gang, had made, as they expected, a successful attempt on some travellers in a carriage unattended; but the gentlemen were prepared for resistance—a strong contest ensued, but at the instant one of them was shot by the hands of Francisco, the servants, who had been detained, came up with them, and surrounded the ruffians, who were unable to resist, from the exertions they had already made, and the surprise into which they were thrown. Four of them were taken prisoners, among whom was Francisco, who had received the fire of a pistol in his arm; but he no sooner found himself disabled and in confinement, from which he had no prospect of escaping, than his rage became unbounded, exceeding even the untamed lion; nor was it till exhausted by his own passion, they could sufficiently secure him for conveyance to a place of safety in the next town, where, with his companions, he was delivered up to the magistrate.

The ruffian who escaped fled to his companions with the fatal intelligence; but Francisco's interest died with his want of power, and, convinced he was too old an offender to be restored again to them, they were unanimous in their wish of appointing Roderigo their chief, dividing the spoil, and immediately hastening from the now unsafe residence to a more remote spot. The latter arrangement Roderigo cheerfully assented to, but declined the compliment meant in their election of him as their leader, though he thanked them for their high opinion of him, adding—"But as I am by this event become undetermined as to my future pursuit, I cannot accept your offer; indeed I think, for the better safety of all, we ought totally to disperse, since incapable of judging how Francisco will act, or what confession the rack may extort from him and his companions."

Roderigo's opinion had, in general, on all occasions, been a law, therefore they did not hesitate in abiding by it; and he

thus obtained at once the long-desired release, and once more found himself at liberty, and the world before him : but that world he was prohibited from entering ; he had violated the laws of society, forfeited all pretensions to the esteem of good men, and had too long been the companion of bad ones to wish for a longer continuance in that guilt in which he was already plunged, and for which he believed only a life of penitence and severity could atone ; his choice, therefore, was soon made, and one motive alone urged him to protract the immediate execution of it—this was, if possible, to gain some satisfactory intelligence of Sigismund, or, as he was styled among them, Henrico : but he endeavoured to persuade himself he must have reached Beauvoir in safety, and that, should he indulge the strong desire he had once more to see him, and impart what had happened, his gratitude and goodness of heart might, by endeavouring to divert him from his purpose, at least weaken his resolutions : he would, there-

fore, as he had promised, write to him, and add the late revolution which had taken place in the fate of Francisco.

This he did, and without waiting to hear the termination of that fate, immediately entered on the life of severity to which he had for ever doomed himself, by entering into the order of La Trappe, of which community he had become a member some time before his letter reached Sigismund, who regretted, with the sincerity that honoured the feelings of gratitude, the steps which must preclude all possibility of his acknowledging how much he owed to the generosity of such a friend. But he was still in suspense as to the destiny of Francisco; Oswald was therefore dispatched to the canton Roderigo had named the capital of, to gain the most satisfactory information, as the count did not think it expedient for either himself or Sigismund to be present on the occasion: but the latter proposed Clairville's accompanying him, as his presence might be requisite, should Oswald reach Switzer-

land before he had suffered for the enormity of his crimes.

This was not the case—his ungovernable rage had produced so violent an inflammation in the wounded arm, that a mortification almost instantly succeeded the amputation, and he died as he had lived, an impenetrable villain, execrating all around him for the tortures he endured, and blaspheming that Power, of whose mercy he had no hope. Hubert and his companions did not thus evade the punishment justice had provided for them, and a public execution, near the place of their atrocious and daring deed, was the reward of it.

There no longer, therefore, remained a vestige of the baneful power which had once destroyed the count's fabric of happiness, and the second, he trusted, was built on a more permanent foundation; it was strengthened by the experience of a dreadful reverse, rendered impregnable by his reliance on the great Disposer of all events; and having lived to embrace not

only the lovely wife of Sigismund, but their offspring also, with a smiling circle of his Henry's children, he looked forward to the close of existence with that peaceful resignation known only to the good and virtuous. His Adelaide was spared to sooth the fading wane of life, and in the full of years he resigned, in her arms, a soul pure as mortality could leave it: but it was only to witness his last sigh she wished to exist; her children were dear, their happiness essential to hers, but it was for Henry only she lived; and the world contained but one spot, when he was gone, where her affliction could find relief—it was beneath that marble which told to passing friends what Henry count De Vennuel once was—and to that peaceful asylum, borne by weeping domestics, and followed by sorrowing relatives, she was soon conveyed. But their remains flourished, when their sacred dust, mingling with its parent earth, left not the wreck of forms once so admired; for the shrine their benevolence

had erected in the grateful hearts of the surrounding poor was still supported by that of their children, in whom every virtue they had possessed bloomed afresh.

**FINIS.**

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